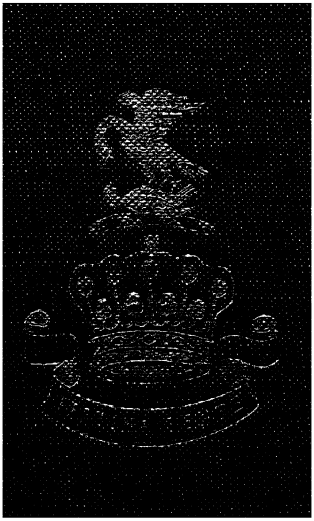

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C. E. V.

CONTENTS

The Onslows have represented for more than three centuries, both in strength and in weakness, a noble family of immense though varying territorial prestige; a succession of men who, without attaining the highest offices in the State, frequently played a part that was by no means inconsiderable in politics, war and administration. Not every Onslow displayed the high integrity of the great Speaker: the first Earl, for example, was a time-server whose loyalties and leanings were continually modified by the tactics which he considered necessary for his personal advancement. But the Onslows of Clandon also represented the English country gentleman in his more magnificent form. They produced characters of startling eccentricity and of dark aloofness; but they preserved, upon the whole, the respect and interest of their neighbours, and were not unfittingly known as "the rulers of Surrey."

I have chosen for specially detailed study three men (father, son and grandson) who illustrate the Onslow paradox in a peculiarly striking way; the Speaker Arthur Onslow, one of the greatest of English Parliamentary figures; "Black George," the first Earl; and the eccentric and uxorious Tom Onslow, the second Earl, who wrote scurrilously witty verses, but whose principal delight was the driving of black horses in a phaeton.

CHAPTER I

Onslow Origins

A LONG and illuminated pedigree is a pretty thing, and still affords a great deal of pleasure to those who can acquire the necessary materials. Unrolled from the highest shelf in the library, and sometimes refusing to ascend again, the lovely colours of blazonry and the exquisite writing of the genealogical scribe are beautiful in themselves and excite the admiration without any further examination of detail. He must feel a more than common delight who knows that he is descended from the mighty Bedwig or the famous Itermod, or those remote and long-lived heroes of Genesis—Cush, Mash, Phut, Lud, Heth, Hul and Aram, and all the builders of Babel.

But the social value and relevance of such a display depend less upon the number of the shields, the intricacy and extent of the tree, than upon the quality of the people who are thus heraldically represented; and also, it may be, upon some other proof of their existence.

A member of the Onslow family (not, let me hasten to add, one who will be mentioned again) devised in all seriousness a pedigree which began with Adam and Eve and ended with himself. Of course he had his authorities. For the earliest part of the line, passing through Noah, Shem, Bedwig, Huala, Huatha and Itermod, he could depend with assurance upon Asser (A.D. 850), Simeon (1070) and Florence (1080). We have his convincing statement that "the above Pedigree was certified as correct" by these ancient and eminent recorders; and I, for one, have neither the knowledge nor the desire to question their accuracy.

There may possibly be a little doubt as to the credibility of what follows: the unrolling of the line by way of Cerdic, Creoda, Ceaulin, Cuthwine, Cutha and Ceowalde . . . to

of increasing importance and wealth. Edward Onslow (who died in 1535), the grandfather of Richard the Speaker, was a member of the Mercers' Guild. He was a good representative of the Onslows of Shropshire, a family which, up to the second half of the sixteenth century, could only have claimed in their own commendation such terms as "ancient" and "respectable." He also established the useful Onslow practice of marrying heiresses.

Roger Onslow of Shrewsbury, who, like his father, Edward, was a member of the Mercers' Company or Guild, was the first of the Onslow family to move out of Shropshire and into the affairs of the larger world, and certainly the first of the Onslows who for the greater part of the year lived in London.

The second son of Roger Onslow by his first wife, Margaret Poyner, was the Speaker Richard (1528-71), whose elder brother, Fulk or Fulke, held the office of Clerk of Parliament.

Richard the Speaker was a most remarkable man who, by merit, industry, learning and a noble presence, raised the family from acknowledged respectability to perceptible renown. In accomplishment and unblemished integrity he was never surpassed, and hardly equalled, by any of his descendants. And we should remember that he did not possess the advantage—an advantage always conspicuous in the later family records—of being steadily supported by influential and assiduous patrons. It is not enough to say that he founded the family fortunes. Fortunes are made in many ways, not always creditably, but this man, by virtue of his own gifts and incomparable dignity, gave the family a name and a reputation far beyond anything which could reasonably have been predicted. At the same time, it may be observed that he was not without some notable though indirect associations through family marriages. Through the Corbets he could claim relationship with the Devereux family; and through his uncle Humphrey's wife he had some claim upon the attention of Lord Richard Dudley.

He was called to the Bar from the Inner Temple and was appointed "Autumn Reader" in 1562. He had sat in the

Parliaments of 1557-58, and again in 1562-63 for the borough of Steyning in Sussex, which he continued to represent until his death.

So remarkable was his legal aptitude that, in 1563, at the age of thirty-five, he was Recorder of London. He was also Attorney-General of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Court of Wards. In 1566 he received the high distinction of being appointed Solicitor-General, and in the same year he was induced against his will to become Speaker of the House of Commons. His election to the Chair was contested (a somewhat unusual event) and he was chosen by 82 votes to 60.

His reluctance to occupy the Chair was excusable. The Commons were beginning a debate on the prickly subject of the royal succession and also the delicately dangerous problem of the Queen's marriage. The tension between Elizabeth and her Parliament, her peevish obstinacy in the Darnley affair and the bill for Prayer-Book reform, her fretfulness and impatience, her quick recessions and impetuous advances, the fiery arrogance of a woman resolved at any cost to prove herself equal or superior to any man or assembly of men, these things brought into the debates of the House of Commons a grim vigilance, an embarrassed courtesy, and even a touch of personal danger that obviously made the Speaker's position anything but a happy one. However, Parliament was dissolved early in the following year (1567) and before the next session had begun Richard Onslow was dead. He died of a "fever" (which he caught when he was visiting his uncle, Humphrey Onslow, at Shrewsbury) after an illness of about five days. At the time of his death (1571) he was forty-three.

The death of Richard Onslow at so early an age may well have deprived the Onslow family of the noblest figure in their records. His fine appearance and honourable nature, his ability as a lawyer, the modesty of a great man, as well as the steady balance of one who could move uprightly among the schemers of a court, his piety and resolution, these were gifts or qualities that would have assured him of a merited eminence. Indeed, they had already procured for him no ordinary distinction. If he is compared with his descendant,

the great Speaker Arthur Onslow, who occupied the Chair in the House of Commons exactly two hundred years after the birth of this notable Elizabethan, he seems potentially the finer man of the two; for Arthur, in all his glory, was never remarkable for modesty of deportment.

Richard Onslow has been described as "a very learned lawyer" and he is credited with the authorship of *Arguments Relating to Sea Landes and Salt Shores*. But he is of particular significance in the family records because he established the Onslows in the county of Surrey.

On the 7th of August 1559, he married Catherine Harding, daughter of Richard Harding of Knoll or Knowle near Cranleigh, not far from the southern border of the county. He thus acquired, in time, a very considerable estate, and we are told that he was also the owner of "large properties" in Middlesex, Gloucester, Shropshire, Sussex and Wiltshire. When in London he lived at the Blackfriars' Convent, of which he had a grant from the Queen.

The transformation of the Onslows from relative mediocrity in Shropshire to the highest importance in Surrey was thus due to the ability of Richard Onslow and his good fortune in marrying an heiress. Even so, the ascendancy of the family was not immediately assured.

Knoll was not well situated, in those days of slow transport and uncertain communications, for a county family of commanding influence. It was not until the headquarters of the Onslows had been moved from Cranleigh to Clandon by the grandson of Richard Onslow that the family acquired, in the words of the Speaker Arthur Onslow, "that interest in the county and in the town of Guildford . . . kept up to a height that has scarcely been equalled in any county by any one family."

It was largely owing to the Puritan mood of the county that the Onslow influence was destined, in the course of a century, to become virtually paramount. By their stern religious temper and the uncoloured austerity of their line, as well as by a natural desire to preserve the integrity of the law, the Onslows found themselves transplanted into a thoroughly congenial soil.

They did not represent the splendours of the Elizabethan renaissance. Their England was never the England of *Euphues*, nor did they show in their manners, dress and accomplishment the warbling, listless and effeminate elegance of the courtiers and the men of high fashion. But they did represent at the outset, very emphatically, those movements which aimed at preserving the rights of Parliament, the freedom of the people and freedom of worship.

These fine ideals, the product as much of ancestry as of clear thinking, were sometimes a little contaminated by the yeoman's propensity to make a good bargain or to strike a compromise. In other words, the quality known to some as laudable shrewdness and to others by a more obnoxious term did indeed play its part in the Onslow history. And yet so much depends upon the position that was occupied at any given moment either by the Onslows or by their detractors. He who is true to conscience must often be false to party.

Richard Onslow, sometimes known as the Black Speaker in reference to his dark hair and swarthiness, was followed as the owner of Knoll by his second son, Edward. This Edward appears to have been noted for nothing more serviceable than "piety," but he still managed, in his correct and unobtrusive way, to maintain the family reputation. His descendant, Arthur Onslow (who repaired his neglected tomb), speaks of him as "eminent for the virtue and sanctity of his life." He married Isabel, daughter of Sir Thomas Shirley of Westenston, and of Preston Place, in Sussex, by which marriage, among more substantial and useful benefits, the Onslows became Founder's Kin of All Souls.

For some reason which is not sufficiently clear, he was the first of the family to receive the honour of knighthood. He died in 1615, leaving two daughters and three sons. His eldest son died without issue, and the estate of Knoll was inherited by his second son, Richard, who later became known as the Red Fox.

CHAPTER II

Richard the Fox

RICHARD THE FOX was born in 1601. Of his education there is little record, though it is known that he was a student of Lincoln's Inn in 1618, two years after the death of his elder brother, Sir Thomas Onslow of Knoll.

This man, one of the most interesting of the Onslows, on account of his place in history and his personal character, presents many difficulties of interpretation. He is both conspicuous and elusive, definite and uncertain, apparently strong in principle and yet ambiguous in performance. He had inherited and accepted the Puritan ethos and was a Presbyterian of the most rigid order.

At the same time he was not unacceptable to James I, a King whose views concerning the rights of Parliament and the uncontrolled extent of the royal prerogative were totally at variance with Onslow's political and religious opinions. He was, in fact, knighted by James at Theobald's in 1624 (the last year of the King's reign) when he was only twenty-three.

For what service, with what intention, was this knighthood conferred? Perhaps the strategic potential of the Surrey families, particularly of those likely to resist the encroachment of a King upon the privileges and rights of the Commons, may have supplied the motive. It was now clear to all observers that the climate of Surrey was one in which the flowers of independence, if not of active revolt, were likely to flourish. Indeed, the Puritan opposition to the luxury and effeminacy of the Court, as well as to the influence of the King's homosexuality on the general conduct of affairs, was already evident in 1620. One cannot suppose that Richard's father, Edward, a man of such unseeking and retired virtue and of such unassertive piety, could ever have

done anything that was likely to involve the continued support of the monarch. But here we have one of the first appearances of the Onslow paradox—an ostensible, though possibly an unreal, discrepancy between achievement and reward.

A final consideration is the importance at this period of almost any well-established county family; for the power of the country gentlemen in forming local opinion and in promoting respect for the law (so eminently vital to their own interest) was very much greater than we commonly imagine. There were no provincial newspapers and the mass of the people were illiterate. News and opinions were therefore propagated by personal contact, and the good will of the greater families was a matter of high importance to the administration.

Like the majority of the Onslows, Sir Richard married an heiress—Dame Elizabeth, the daughter of Arthur Strangwaies or Strangways of Durham and London. He had fourteen children, of whom six sons and five daughters reached maturity. He served as a Knight of the Shire for Surrey in the Parliament of 1628 and as a Justice of the Peace. In 1638 he was one of the Deputy Lieutenants.

So far there is little that is remarkable in the history of Richard the Fox unless it be his consolidation of the family position in Surrey and the steadiness of his advance in personal prestige and in dignity of office; but he was presently to play a part which, to this day, is among the minor mysteries of historical biography.

The date of Richard's marriage appears to be unknown, but he was clearly married at a very early age, for his eldest son, Arthur, was born in 1621 or 1622. It is obvious that the family at Knoll were strictly Presbyterian, and in the course of time both Richard and his son Arthur carried out their duties as Elders of the Church.

From 1629 to 1640 King Charles and his ministers usurped the functions of Parliament and the affairs of the country were controlled by the personal policy of the monarch. During this period of eleven years the constitutional opposition was acquiring both weight and resolve.

Although Richard was a Puritan he maintained friendly relations, at least up to 1640, with the Lord Lieutenant, Nottingham, a Cavalier, and with Thomas, Earl of Arundel, who, until 1642, was joint Lieutenant. He was, moreover, during the whole of his life, on friendly terms with the Howard family. But the Cavalier influence in Surrey was rapidly declining from 1638, and Richard's personal power as Deputy Lieutenant became steadily stronger until, in the opening years of the Civil War, it was virtually supreme.

Richard Onslow served in the Short Parliament of 1640, dismissed by the King after a session of only three weeks (April 13th to May 5th), and was returned to the Long Parliament in November of the same year. By this time the national issue was clearly emerging as that of Parliament against the King, and Richard's position was temporarily well defined as that of a resolute and active Parliamentarian.

In 1641, as the prospect of a civil war became imminent, and as the prestige of Richard in Surrey developed into one of paramount importance, a vital decision was made and the headquarters of the Onslow family were eventually moved from Knoll to West Clandon, about three miles from Guildford. This move on Richard's part was directed by the principles of high strategy. Every reason—political, social, military and economic—was in favour of such a move. The owners of a property in Clandon would be in close touch both with the affairs of the county and those of the important borough of Guildford. They would be within reasonable distance of London, and well placed on the line of communication between the capital and Portsmouth. They would also be within convenient reach of the other great landowners in the county, with whom or against whom they would form the necessary alliances of power. For the Onslows were now resolved upon the acquisition and retention of the highest influence as a county family. (The Onslow properties in Shropshire were sold by Richard.)

There would appear to be something faintly ironical in the purchase by Roundhead Richard of a Cavalier mansion.

This mansion, a large and extremely well-proportioned Elizabethan-Renaissance house in Clandon Park, was the

property of Sir Richard Weston. It seems likely that it was built on the site of a smaller and much earlier house known as "the Lodge" or "the Hunting Lodge," for we have an exact representation of Weston's house, painted by Knyff early in the eighteenth century: clearly a house which could never have been described by so humble a term as "lodge."

The house was a brick structure of noble dimensions, covering the same, or possibly a larger area than that of the present building, with a large block for the accommodation of horses, coaches and retainers on its northern flank. There was a handsome clock-tower over the main entrance. It was surrounded by a most elaborate system of formal gardens and the regiments of orderly trees that were so typical of English properties up to the second or third decades of the eighteenth century. There were three fountains; and a strange ornamental water with rounded ends, hedged in by a trim though bosky plantation of trees, dark where they met the water, though touched above with a delicate silvered light. Fields on the one side and orchards on the other provided evidence of good husbandry; and the Knyff picture certainly presents a view of opulence and of comely order where nature and sophistication were happily united.

Sir Richard Weston of Sutton Place was at this time (1641) a man of about fifty. He had inherited the estates of Clandon and of Sutton in 1613 after his father's death. He was a Catholic and a Royalist, practically and expensively interested in devising canals, weirs and locks, besides being deeply concerned in agriculture. In 1642 he fled from England and occupied himself congenially in the study of waterways and farms in the Low Countries, which he had visited in his youth. He died ten years later.

From this point, after his move to Clandon, the history of Richard the Fox becomes complicated and exciting.

Sir Richard who, like so many of the Onslows, had any amount of dashing physical bravery and was undismayed by steel or powder, quickly made up his mind. He would be a fighting man: he would lead the horsemen of Surrey against the armies of the King. The time for talking and writing was past long ago;—cut and slash, thrust of pike and fire of

musketoon—these were the only arguments that could now prevail. Let them call upon the avenging Lord who is mighty in battle, for the struggle would be decided, and that soon, upon God's field of glory.

And so, while Dame Elizabeth and the family were settling themselves (we may assume) in their new home at Clandon, Sir Richard Onslow and the men of Surrey prepared for the fight.

In 1642, when the Civil War began, Onslow was forty-one, and his eldest son, Arthur, had come of age. It does not appear that Arthur was engaged at any time in military operations, but it may well be that he was deputed by his father to look after the property and the household at Clandon, although the actual date of the completed family move to Clandon is uncertain.

The figure and action of Arthur are somewhat vague. The long face and the low brow that are to be seen in his portrait at Clandon do not indicate any strength or precision of character. He sat with his father in the two Parliaments of Cromwell, and also in the Convention Parliament. We have evidence that his political attitudes (for perhaps they were scarcely opinions) did not always agree with those of his father, and he was by no means unprepared to accept with a good grace and a respectful demeanour the restoration of the Stuarts.

Sir Richard already commanded the county Train Bands or Militia. This gave him a promising start; but there were difficulties. The arms and ammunition for his men were stored at Kingston, and Kingston was almost the only town in Surrey that was Royalist by inclination. Early in the year (1642) it became known that a group of Royalist supporters, under arms, were assembling at Kingston, a rallying centre where Digby had already made his appearance. When Sir Richard entered the town at the head of his Train Bands he was not well received; but the Royalist officers presently withdrew (one of them was arrested) and the town relapsed into a state of ostensible neutrality.

In the wars of this period—and indeed up to a much later date—cavalry were of supreme importance; not only because

of their decisive impact in battle, but also as mobile patrols, observers, pursuers, despatch-riders, troops on the lines of communication, skirmishers, guards and escorts. Both sides understood this very well, and upon the quality of their horsemen the issues of the war might well depend.

It is an obvious though remarkable tribute to the military competence of Onslow that he was ordered to raise a Surrey regiment of horse and to lead it into action as a colonel. Until the appearance of Cromwell himself in the field, the Parliamentary forces had no cavalry leader to compare with Royalist Rupert, who combined the knowledge of a specialist with a highly imaginative and audacious tactical ability. The training and leadership of horse was therefore a matter of vital concern.

Onslow raised his regiment of Surrey horse with great speed and efficiency, but again there were troubles. He was responsible for the maintenance of a garrison at Farnham Castle, ten miles west of Guildford. The commander of the garrison was George Wither or Withers, a mettlesome elderly poet of powerful religious conviction and austere bearing.

Wither at this time was about fifty-four. He had produced in his earlier years pastoral and satirical poems as well as religious verses. He was a vicious pamphleteer, and was not infrequently in the Marshalsea or Newgate. For many years he lived in a cottage at Farnham, addicted rather grimly to theological studies. This turn of mind led him to write a great deal of religious poetry which is not usually considered of the highest order. He sold his little property in 1642, raised a troop of horse for the Parliament and was then placed in command at Farnham Castle with the rank of Captain. His garrison included some of Onslow's militia. When Rupert's cavalry threatened Farnham, Wither seems to have lost his nerve; and eventually, in circumstances which are by no means clear, he withdrew the garrison and its military stores. He was afterwards captured by the King's forces and owed his life to the intercession of Sir John Denham, who flippantly observed that if Wither were executed he himself would be the worst poet in England.

The affair of the Castle at Farnham was intensely annoying to Sir Richard Onslow, who thus lost an important position on his flank, until the Castle was reoccupied by Waller. The quarrel between Onslow and Wither flared up unpleasantly in 1644, when Onslow deprived Wither of his command of militia in the middle and eastern divisions of Surrey and also succeeded in getting him removed from the Commission of the Peace; whereupon the poet retaliated venomously with a pamphlet which he called *Justitiarius Justificatus* (see Appendix D), and accused Sir Richard of secretly corresponding with King Charles. Obviously the matter had to be cleared up: Sir Richard was eventually vindicated by Parliament, and the *Justificatus* pamphlet was burned publicly in Guildford by the hangman.

There seems no doubt whatever that Wither's charges against Onslow were mainly though not entirely untrue. The poet was a rancorous and unstable man. He has been satirically represented in his own time by Ben Jonson as *Chronomastix*, and was retrospectively denounced by Pope as "wretched Wither" and by Swift as "Bavius." It is true that his verses were praised by Lamb and also by Coleridge; but he was damned in the most effectual manner by the commendation of Robert Southey.

One of the first acts of Sir Richard Onslow in the early stages of the conflict was the arrest of Mr. Justice Mallett, who, after being warned at Kingston, removed the Assizes to Dorking, where he was apprehended. The excuse for this high-handed breach of legality, this outrage upon the very body of Justice, was the rumour that Mallett intended to adjourn the Sessions and then make his way to the King's party in the field. Whether he was acting under instructions or not, this was one of the deeds which made things extremely unpleasant for Richard at the time of the Restoration.

In November 1642 Rupert's cavalry were in Farnham, and it seemed as though Kingston were in danger of a Royalist advance across the Thames. Again Richard Onslow was in trouble. He had established his personal headquarters at Kingston, and he now felt uncertain about the temper and

action of the Surrey men if the town became involved in a battle.

He therefore withdrew himself and his forces: thus following the example of Wither at Farnham. There is, one must allow, something a little disturbing about this withdrawal, but no doubt we can justify it by the prompt use of those convenient and restorative words, the saviours of much greater military reputations—"strategic" or "tactical." At any rate, the evacuation of Kingston was a matter of no military consequence. The troops of Waller swept into Surrey very soon afterwards, and it was then the turn of the King's men to withdraw from the whole county.

Sir Richard Onslow did not see active service until the summer of 1644 when he was ordered to join the forces of Norton at the siege of Basing House. He took with him the Red Regiment of Surrey, two Farnham regiments and three troops of horse.

Basing House, the home of the Marquess of Winchester, a Catholic, was a fortified position of great importance covering the southern approaches to Oxford. (Thus, Basing in the south, like Banbury in the north, was vital to the strategy and security of the Royalist armies.) It is said that Onslow "distinguished himself" at the siege of Basing House. I do not know how this was done, but I have no doubt whatever as to the accuracy of the statement.

On the 1st of July the horsemen of Cromwell swept away the troopers of Rupert in the terrible fight of Marston Moor, the King's position in the north collapsed in hopeless disorder, and a vigorous campaign might have secured an early victory for the Parliament. But the higher command of the Puritan forces, then represented by men like Manchester and Essex, could not bring themselves to attempt the annihilation of the Royalist armies and the capture of the King.

The siege of Basing House dragged on, where Richard Onslow, after the dispatch of Norton's cavalry to the north in June, was in local command of the entire mounted force. His post was one of great responsibility and shows beyond any question the confidence of his commanders and the

ability of Sir Richard himself. The siege was raised in November after Waller's defeat in Hampshire, and Richard was again stationed at Farnham.

It was now realised that a reform of the Parliamentary army was needed, and a change in the whole system of the higher command, if the campaign was to end in an overwhelming victory. All members of Parliament were instructed to resign their commands, and Fairfax undertook, with rapid and astonishing success, the shaping of the New Model. This ended for the time the military career of Sir Richard Onslow, but we are told by his descendant, the fifth Earl of Onslow, that "he still continued in administrative charge of the County, and throughout the year we read in the State Papers of orders being sent to him from Derby House."

The New Model won the war at a single stroke when it broke the Royalist force at Naseby in June 1645. The storming of Basing House in October, with its complete destruction and the slaughter of most of its defenders, was little more than a clearing-up operation. After painful and aimless wanderings the King surrendered to the Scots at Newark in May 1646.

A phase of intrigue and of treacherous plotting followed, with a spasmodic renewal of the war in 1648, at which time Sir Richard Onslow was a member of the Derby House Committee. He and his son Arthur were among the Presbyterian members who were anxious to save the life of the King: they were expelled from the House by the Purge of Pride, and Richard returned to Surrey, where his influence, though perhaps a little obscured, was by no means extinguished. The King was executed at Whitehall on the 30th of January 1649.

The Onslow records are broken off in 1650, but in the following year Richard was in harness again. A summons to Clandon in the summer of 1651 called upon him once more to raise a regiment of Surrey cavalry and once more to be their colonel. This, I think, is decisive evidence of Onslow's renown as a leader of mounted troops, a renown which appears to have been greater than his fame as a

dependable Parliamentarian. He received his final orders on the 20th of August: he was to raise and arm a regiment of horse and to effect, as rapidly as possible, a junction with Cromwell's forces in the neighbourhood of Worcester where a battle was imminent between the Commonwealth troops and Prince Charles, already proclaimed as Charles II by Montrose in Scotland.

After the defeat of Charles by Cromwell at Dunbar (September 3, 1650) the Prince—for he had no other legal title in England—still commanded a force of misled or fanatical Scotsmen. He rashly invaded England in 1651, slipping through to the west of the Pennines, while Cromwell marched on a parallel route on the other side of the hills.

In August the two main forces were converging upon Worcester. On the 27th Cromwell had swung up from Evesham at the head of some 28,000 men, while the forces remaining with Charles were now only about 16,000—a crowd of dispirited and ragged Scotsmen, already alarmed by the hostile attitude of the English and certainly not in good order for a battle against such terrifying odds. But men often fight at their best when the situation is desperate. Moreover, the obstacle of the Severn obliged Cromwell to divide his force in order to control both banks of the river. He had received welcome reinforcements before the battle and he went into the field with a total strength of about 30,000 men: a superiority of nearly two to one.

Onslow had quickly raised his regiment and was quickly on the road. He moved off from Surrey before the end of August; the precise date of departure seems to be unknown.

From this point, it has to be allowed, Colonel Sir Richard Onslow marches into a strange obscurity wherein the shadow of more than one suspicion is discernible. In this obscurity he won for himself, not renown in battle, but the sobriquet of the Red Fox. The plain fact is that he did not arrive on the outskirts of Worcester until the 4th of September, the day after the battle. What was he doing, and where was he, on the 3rd of September?

Upon the answer to this question depends ultimately the good fame of Sir Richard Onslow. But the answer will never

be known. According to his descendant, the great Speaker Arthur Onslow, "he had no good Will towards the Service and did not come up to the army until after the Fight, which Cromwell imputed to his not being very hearty in the Cause and said in a passion that He should one time or another be even with that Fox of Surrey, though Whitelock . . . says he marched hard to come up to the Engagement. . . ." There is a reference to "a paper in his handwriting" in which he said there was a plot to ruin him, and he therefore kept away from the battle on purpose. This is unintelligible and only serves to thicken the obscurity. It is also alleged that he was concerned in Penruddock's insurrection and had often expressed his regard for the royal family. In view of the fact that Onslow was later among those who urged Cromwell to accept the Crown, this is entirely bewildering, and the investigation is thus led into a cul-de-sac from which a baffled return is the only possible course.

The issue of the battle of Worcester was of course a foregone conclusion, and the arrival of a few hundred mounted men from Surrey could have made no difference whatever; although a troop or so of cavalry might have been of some use in the pursuit of the routed Scots—none of whom ever saw his own country again. But everything connected with Richard and his behaviour (which is, after all, of no great historical consequence) remains vague and unsatisfactory. It has been suggested that his apparent reluctance to take part in the battle, and also the "paper in his own handwriting," can be taken as evidence that he had in mind the possibility of a Stuart restoration, and that he was, in fact, a trimmer. The Speaker Arthur Onslow described him as one who had "a sort of Art and Cunning about him," though he adds the very shrewd observation that he lived in times that were very difficult for a man who disliked extremes. This may be so, and Cromwell's angry assertion that Onslow "had Charles Stuart in his belly" need not be taken as anything more than a burst of petulance.

The relations between Onslow and Cromwell after the battle of Worcester and during the seven years that followed are complex and obscure. The Fox had a way of writing

papers referring to past events, in which he seems anxious to prove his own practice of double-crossing, his disloyalty to the disloyal, his treachery to the treacherous, and his claim to be regarded all along as a crypto-Royalist. It is now impossible for any biographer to arrive at the whole truth in these matters.

The main facts are that Richard sagaciously retired to his estates at the end of 1651 and was inconspicuous in politics until the time of the Protectorate. He opposed the military government of the Major-Generals, an instance of political decision and a brave assertion of principle by no means frequent in his ordinary behaviour. In one of his precautionary papers he stated that he was involved in the Penruddock insurrection at Salisbury, and in February 1657 he opposed the Pack motion urging the Protector to accept the title of King—an attitude that he quickly reversed when it became known that Parliament was to consist of two Houses and he himself was likely to become a bogus "Lord."

In April 1657 Richard was accordingly a member of the Committee which offered the Crown to His Highness the Lord Protector. By the end of the year he was one of the "Lords" in the Upper House, an assembly referred to by the scoffing opposition as "the other House" and not "the House of Lords,"—of which it was, indeed, a short-lived and inexcusable travesty.

Cromwell died on the 3rd of September 1658, the anniversary of the great battles of Dunbar and of Worcester. From this time, although we are assured that the influence of Richard Onslow in Surrey was paramount, he ceases to be a figure of political significance. In 1664, while visiting the Duke of Norfolk in London, he died.

It seems clear that Richard Onslow had principles; but whether his principles were those of an ambitious egoist or those of a political idealist must remain uncertain. He aimed, I think, at what is now called "stability," and it mattered little to him whether stability was achieved under King Charles or King Oliver. His political activities during the Commonwealth, as they had no decisive influence upon the course of affairs, and reveal nothing that is really definite

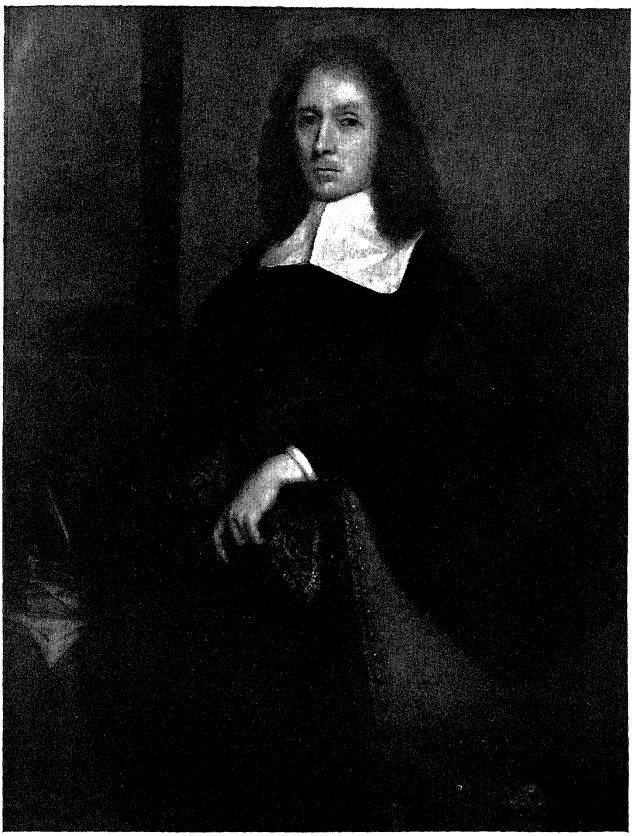
concerning his true character, may be left in the obscurity of incomplete records.

The fifth Earl of Onslow, to whose work on the family history I am so much indebted, expresses the view that Richard, while serving in the Protector's Parliament, "was doubtless in touch with what was going on upon the Royalist side"; though he concludes that Richard was "an honest man with a clear idea of the principles he believed in."

This "clear idea," most unfortunately, has not been preserved. The best way of supporting Richard's claim to "honesty" is by appeal to the splendid vagueness of what is known as "the Constitution," a thing both substantial and amorphous and only definable by implication in a magnificent series of negatives.

Onslow himself, though not his son Arthur, was looked upon with disfavour at the time of the Restoration. The special charges brought against him were the arrest of Justice Mallett, the seizure of the King's powder-mills at Chilworth, the fact that he had referred to his Majesty as "a porcupine," and his indictment for high treason at Oxford in 1642. He was in grave danger of being excluded from the Act of Indemnity. That no action was taken against him was probably due to his friendship with Monk (certainly a double-dealer) and with Ashley Cooper, and the influence of Sir Ralph Freeman, whose son had married one of Onslow's daughters. In order to make himself entirely secure he obtained a Pardon under the Great Seal.

A printed pamphlet which is preserved among the Clandon archives, bearing the title *Gratitude in Season, or a Word for Sir Richard Onslow* and published in 1661, defends him vigorously against "the aspersions of a late scandalous Libel Called Policy Unmasked." The defence proves, not so much the political integrity of Onslow as the constancy with which he protected his friends, regardless of party. There was, it appears, a "secret friendship" between Onslow and "Captain Edward Andrews of Flexwood . . . in his suffering for His late Majesty"—the same Andrews who published the tract. Onslow twice rescued Andrews from trial by a military court. Among others greatly indebted to the friend-



(*Photograph : A. C. Cooper Ltd.*)

Sir Richard Onslow (1601-1664). From the picture in the possession of the Earl of Onslow. (Artist unknown.)

ship of Onslow were the Norfolks, "Mr. Henry Hyldegard of East Horsley, Mr. Edward Thurland of Rygate, Mr. Zouch of Oking, Mr. Rogers of Lethered, and Mr. Munger of Goddlemane."

What are we to think of Richard the Fox? Was he, as he may well seem, the first of the Onslow trimmers? One has to allow that he has gone to earth in the completest way.

Did his professed enlargement of principle actually represent a true political philosophy, a system of liberal ideas, or was he casuistically defending his tactical essays as a place-hunter? (His contemporaries, both Parliamentarian and Royalist, looked upon him as a man whose fidelities were doubtful.) Or was he a man whose behaviour can be taken to represent an unresolvable conflict of ideas, the common predicament of one who is timid and ambitious, cunning and unwary at the same time? This, I think, may have been his peculiar trouble—that he tried to merge in a single code of action various principles that refused obstinately to coalesce in any pattern which he knew to be safe and respectable. Perhaps he allowed the smaller vices of craft and irresolution to nibble at the props of his integrity until the whole structure was insecure. He was thus incapable of displaying in the fullest measure either villainy or virtue.

Frederic Barlow in his *Complete English Peerage* (1775) has a good deal to say about Sir Richard:

> "We are told . . . that he was no favourer of a commonwealth; that he was at none of the meetings for bringing the King to his trial; and that he accepted no employment from those in power . . . that he was in principle for monarchical government, and for that reason did not accept of being one of the council of state, either under Oliver or his son Richard; but for the most part lived retired at his seat in Surry."

The face of Richard the Fox as we see it in the Clandon portrait reveals an inscrutable reserve, the subtlety or the indecision of a character whose action was never predictable. It is neither humane nor malevolent, but studiously neutral. Whatever it may be, it is not the face of a simple outspoken man, implicitly to be trusted; not the face of a man who could

welcome a stranger, or necessarily entertain his own relations, with unaffected warmth.

I think it may be said of Red Richard that he had in mind, as a thing above all others desirable, the formation of a stable government, whether monarchy, republic or commonwealth. He did not therefore consider himself committed by partisan loyalty to persons or politics, except to those who appeared, at any given time, in a position favourable to the accomplishment of his ideal.

It would be unfair and historically unscientific to read in his face and his record the temporising and watchful egoism that appeared in more than one of his descendants. During the Civil War he proved himself a capable and active commander; and it is not unlikely that the events which occurred between the execution of Charles and the battle of Worcester may have modified his opinion of Cromwell and his policy.

Although Wither's main attack in the *Justificatus* pamphlet (Appendix D) was doubtless unwarranted, he seems to have been right in accusing Onslow of having assumed in Surrey the powers of a truculent and unforgiving dictator, one who aimed at nothing less than "the Supremacie over all Causes and all Persons." That he was guilty of "arming Malignants," and was "the most bitter and implacable Enemy" to those who supported the Parliament is clearly false.

The problems remain, and Richard the Fox moves dimly in the troubled shadows of distant, unhappy events, a man very strangely unable to excite any emotions whatsoever.

CHAPTER III

Family Fortunes

SIR RICHARD THE FOX was the first and the last of the Onslows who got himself dangerously entangled in political schemes. From his time onwards the family steered a course which, although sometimes erratic, was finely adjusted to the state of the tides and the weather.

This happy steersmanship was due to the steady increase of territorial prestige, the advantages of a progressive outlook which led, as though by nature, to an orthodox Whiggism, and the felicitous acquisition of wealth—partly through commercial enterprise, partly (and perhaps more largely) through the almost unbroken Onslow practice of marrying heiresses.

Arthur Onslow, the son of the Fox, only represents in the mildest way the qualities which procured for the Onslows their later renown. He is prim, dim, distant and unassertive. Like his great-grandfather, the Elizabethan Speaker, he was an accomplished lawyer, and he also resembled his great ancestor in being a man whose principles were consistent and whose honour was never in question. By marrying the daughter of Sir Thomas Foote, Lord Mayor of London, in 1649, he acquired, by grant in 1666, a reversion of the baronetcy of his father-in-law; a reversion justly described as "a positive sign of Stuart favour." He also acquired a fortune. John Evelyn visited him in September 1670 "at West Clandon, a pretty dry seat on the Downs, where we dined in his great room."

In 1673 he was High Steward of Guildford in succession to the Duke of Norfolk, and in 1685 declared himself in favour of the Exclusion Bill and so made himself obnoxious to James. As a result of this, "instructions" were given to the High Sheriff of Surrey that he was to prevent the return

to Parliament of Arthur and his colleague, George Evelyn: their supporters were intimidated, and the candidates were forced to withdraw. Although his son, Richard, was returned for Guildford, this was the end of Arthur's political activities. He died in 1688.

Sir Arthur Onslow was an honest man, and it was through honesty, not through calculation, that he set the family course on the right bearing. He loved a country life and its ordinary pursuits. He rode and hunted and was interested in improving the breed of the fish in his modest lake. What is more, this quiet and reasonable gentleman greatly extended the family influence. One reads with regret that his monument, and those of his father and mother, were thrown out of the church at Cranleigh and *lost* when the church was "restored" in 1845.

His brother Denzil was another pleasant and useful country gentleman, of whom, and of whose teeming estate, we have an account in Evelyn's Diary. He also has a fine score on the matrimonial side, for he married a double heiress: his wife (the sister of Arthur's wife) was not only the daughter and co-heiress of Sir Thomas Foote, but also the widow of Sir John Lewis, who had acquired a vast fortune by trading in Persia and India. The two sisters had thus married the two brothers, greatly to the brothers' advantage.

Denzil was a country gentleman of the more splendid and exuberant order. Although described as a fervent Whig, it is clear that he took his politics lightly and was immersed in the pleasures and inventions of his fine estate at Pyrford, near Ripley, where he feasted his neighbours in a style that must have outshone anything which could have been accomplished by his brother and (later) by his nephew Richard at Clandon.

The most notable of his devices was a series of wicker duck-tunnels, more properly described as a decoy (painted by Francis Barlow). It was covered with netting and thatched at the sides, with peepholes for the operators.

John Evelyn dined at Pyrford in August 1681 when he was staying with his brother at Wotton. There was, he said,

"much company, and such an extraordinary feast as I had hardly ever seen at any country gentleman's table." Everything came from the estate—venison, rabbits, hares, pheasants, partridges, pigeons, quails, poultry, "all sorts of fowl in season from his own decoy near the house," and every kind of fish. "After dinner we went to see sport at the decoy, where I never saw so many herons." Evelyn described the house, which Onslow had bought from Sir Robert Parkhurst, as built of timber "but commodious, and with one ample dining-room, the hall adorned with paintings of fowl and huntings, &c., the work of Mr. Barlow—." Two of these excellent pictures, one of an ostrich and one of a cassowary, are now at Clandon Park, as well as two large canvases, one of them showing the "decoy." Francis Barlow (1626-1702) was easily supreme among the sporting and animal painters of the seventeenth century, and a very accomplished etcher.

Denzil Onslow died in 1721 at the age of eighty. His political activities, though varied, are of no great consequence. His house at Pyrford no longer exists.

The second son of Sir Richard the Fox, another Richard, was the first of the Onslows to take an active part in the trade with Turkey: he lived for some time in Smyrna.

But the fortunes of the Clandon Onslows, after the death of Sir Arthur, were in the hands of his eldest son. This man has been most unjustly described as one of small abilities. On the contrary, he was a man of splendid ambition and of more than ordinary competence and resource. To the family he is generally known as "the second Speaker," and in this capacity his dark enigmatical face, contemptuously smiling, looks down from the large frame in the "Speaker's Parlour" at Clandon. But his brief occupation of the Chair was the least important of his activities.

Richard Onslow, the first of the Onslow Barons, inherited the estates in Surrey after the death of his father in 1688. He inherited also the solid and undeviating principles of a Whig, to which he was consistently true. These principles were ultimately of the greatest advantage to him, but they were based upon a genuine constitutional belief and

were never degraded as the instruments of a mere place-hunter.

Misrepresented, as I think he was, both by contemporary opinion and by recent reference, Richard Onslow is one of the most important members of his family. He was the first Onslow to receive the immediate favours of a royal countenance (even if the countenance was a little repulsive), the first who desired to invoke the prestige and the beauty of splendid architecture and of noble planning, and the first who combined the advantages of a politician with those of a company director. This may not be the description of a great man, though it certainly is the description of one who should be given a very high place in the family record. His claim to this eminence goes even further. He it was who persuaded the greatest of all the Onslows, the Speaker Arthur, to enter public life at the age of twenty-four, and so gave him the impulse of steady confidence which led him in time to such high renown in Parliamentary history.

Richard was born in 1654, matriculated from St. Edmund Hall at Oxford in 1671, left the University without a degree, was admitted a student of the Inner Temple in 1674 but was never called to the Bar. This is clearly the start of a man of personal independence, from whom a great deal may be expected.

Through his father's influence he was returned as the Member for Guildford in 1678, at the age of twenty-four, and he continued to represent the borough until the dissolution of Parliament in July 1687 by the impatient and arbitrary action of James II.

It was clear to Onslow that he had everything to gain through the revolution of an outraged country, as anxious now to be rid of the Stuarts as it had been zealous for their restoration less than thirty years previously. He represented the Puritan temper with, perhaps, a touch of the Puritan sourness and irritability as well as the Puritan emphasis upon discipline. He was now, in 1688, to see the glorious victory of those principles and ideas which his grandfather had simulated or diluted and which his father (who died in this very year of triumph) had represented with gentle though firm sincerity.

Sir Richard Onslow, who had succeeded to the reversion of the baronetcy in 1688, was thirty-four at the time of the Revolution. He stood at one of those junctures in history when the sudden acceleration of events, the changing of a whole order, divides one period from another with a cleaving line so sharp and precise that it seems to involve a break in continuity.

For this change he was well prepared by nature, place, tradition and opportunity. He had, of course, married an heiress (in 1676); the lusciously beautiful daughter of Sir Henry Tulse (Lord Mayor of London), whose portrait by Kneller, painted at the time of her marriage, shows her in the voluptuous disorder of the Stuart fashion. (Richard's own portrait, also by Kneller, was painted at the same time. He lolls with confident ease, richly though informally dressed, a dark unhandsome youth, but obviously one of no ordinary sort.)

Thus equipped, Sir Richard became a member of William's Convention Parliament, to which he was returned for the county of Surrey. Apart from an interval in 1710-13, after his brief occupation of the Chair in the House of Commons and his failure to be re-elected for his constituency during the phase of Tory reaction (following the impeachment of Sacheverell), he represented the county until his elevation to the Peerage in 1716. And even this interval did not exclude him from Parliament. Through the obliging influence of Godolphin he slipped in by way of the controlled or rotten borough of St. Mawes in Cornwall. A rotten borough in the hands of a good friend was one of the greatest of political blessings. He was eleven times elected Knight of the Shire for Surrey.

Richard Onslow was a man of impetuous temper, kindling on some occasions to pugnacious violence. It was not within his nature to be impartial or to simulate agreement in matters which he privately opposed. But he was a kind man and a trusted man. His nephew, the Speaker Arthur Onslow, described him as "tall and very thin, not well shaped, and with a face exceeding plain, yet there was a certain sweetness with a dignity in his countenance. . . ." Furthermore, "He

had always something to say that was agreeable to everybody, and used to take as much pleasure in telling a story to a man's advantage, as others generally do to the contrary." Lord Dartmouth described him very differently as "a trifling vain man of ridiculous figure, full of party zeal," and usually known as "Stiff Dick." Queen Caroline, on the other hand (when Princess of Wales), said "that notwithstanding the plainness of his Countenance and Person there was something Great in his manner and carriage that drew a particular respect for him as soon as he was seen."

Although his honesty compelled Sir Richard to oppose the King's retention of troops after the Peace of Ryswick (1697) and always to support the principle of a limited militia, William had a great respect for Onslow: he called him to his closet not long before his death and "bade him continue the honest man he had always found him." This quality of the "honest man," or, to use Burnet's variation, the "worthy man," seems to me one of the distinctions of Sir Richard Onslow.

It has been alleged in a modern work that he abused his power during his brief office as a Lord of the Admiralty (1690-93) in order to obtain special privileges for the Turkey Company, of which he was Governor. This disingenuous and ill-considered attack does not mention the very short period during which Onslow held his post at the Admiralty; nor can I see why the assistance of trade, in matters which did not involve the slightest illegality or betrayal of trust, should be regarded as particularly nefarious. Not only is there no evidence of criminal action, but it must also be remembered that Onslow did not possess absolute authority.

Onslow was the Whig choice for Speaker of the House of Commons in the predominantly Tory Parliament of 1701; but Harley secured the Chair. His chance came again in 1708 when the Whigs, who had been rising to power in the warm enthusiasm generated by Marlborough's great victory at Blenheim, were now the strongest party. He was elected in preference to his neighbour in Surrey, Sir Peter King of Ockham, who, in the same year, was made Recorder of

London and received a knighthood. (King was a leading Whig, the son of a grocer and drysalter of Exeter by the daughter of Peter Locke, John Locke's uncle. He rose to great eminence in the law, and in 1718 was raised to the Peerage as Lord King, Baron of Ockham in Surrey, and Lord Chancellor. Illness compelled him to resign the Great Seal in 1733, and he died in the following year.)

As a Speaker, Richard Onslow was not distinguished. I have already said that it was not in his nature to be impartial, and his conduct in the Chair was flagrantly favourable to his own party. "Many," according to Dasent, "would have preferred Sir Peter King." No doubt King, with his judicial training, would have been infinitely more dependable, though his morbidly nervous diffidence, and the promptings of an inflexible conscience which always demanded the most ample consideration of the most ridiculous trifle, would have sorely tried the patience of the House. But Stiff Dick, unable as he was to neutralise the zeal and eagerness of his political faith, was at least a master of procedure, which he enforced with imperious and even choleric authority.

Towards the end of his term in the Chair—and also towards the end of the Whig ascendancy—when his party was demanding the impeachment of Sacheverell, he sternly quelled the impertinence or the awkwardness of Black Rod in the House of Lords. Imagining himself to be obstructed by this official, he cried out with anger: "My Lords, if you do not immediately order your Black Rod to behave properly . . . I will return to the House of Commons at once." (A very similar fracas took place in 1739 when Richard's nephew, the great Arthur, was piloting an address to the King.)

In 1714 Onslow was sent to Flanders for consultation with Marlborough. From the 21st of October in the same year to the 11th of October of the following year he was Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. On his resignation in November 1715 he was made one of the Tellers of the Exchequer for life. In 1716 he was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Surrey (he had been High Steward of Guildford from 1688) and was elevated to the Peerage as

Lord Onslow, Baron of Onslow in the County of Salop and of West Clandon in the County of Surrey. On the 5th of December 1717 he died.

Lord Onslow's political existence, thus briefly related, is hardly spectacular; but at least it is the record of an extremely competent and honest man, and one who never deviated from what he believed to be right. However, the family historian will, I think, be more concerned with his private life and the immensely important part he played in building up the family fortunes.

Of Lord Onslow's three sons—Thomas, Daniel and Richard—only the first, who was born about 1680 (the exact date is unknown), lived to maturity and became the owner of Clandon. It was clearly Richard's intention, the usual intention of dutiful though ambitious fathers, to give the boy a thorough polish and send him out into the world of politics and affairs with all the assurance of good breeding, an elegant style and a courtly approach. In this enterprise he was only moderately successful. The assurance of Thomas Onslow was that of a privileged though occasionally unpleasing buffoon, of elegance he had none at all, and his approach was, in the words of Arthur the Speaker, "generally distasteful and sometimes shocking."

A letter from Sir Richard Onslow (as he then was) to a member of the Embassy at the Hague in 1697, possibly Matthew Prior, throws a passing light on precious Tom, a youth of sixteen or seventeen (Clandon MSS.):

> "I have not often heard from my son, but recd his acknowledgement of yr great favours to him. I hope neither of us will ever omit any opportunity to convince you a more grateful acceptance is hardly possible in nature. Since he has already seen the most considerable places in Holland, &c, to see Hambourgh or any other parts of Germany will take up more of his time than I can prevail with his Mother or other Relations to allow him, for I am by this very post oblig'd to let him know he is desir'd to take the very first opportunity to return to England, and that he should wait at the Hague for it. Our hopes of peace dayly decline with so much dissatisfaction. Being in town for a day or two was yesterday at ye Exchange and Garraways."

This letter, which has no formal beginning, must have been written before October. Its pessimism is unjustified, for the Peace of Ryswick was concluded in that month.

The sons of noble families, in those days, entered Parliament as a matter of course, and Thomas Onslow was returned for Gatton in 1702, when his father represented the county of Surrey. There is a reference to him in the first of two interesting letters from the Duke of Somerset to Sir Richard Onslow. These letters, now in the Clandon archives, were written in June 1713 when Queen Anne was ill and there were grave apprehensions—very well founded—of a Jacobite rising. The first is dated June 20th:

"Sir,—Hearing that you and your Son are now at Clandon, because you thought nothing more was to bee done of consequence this Session than what you had already been engaged in, I doe therefore give you notice that on Munday next there will be a motion made in both houses; of the last moment to us, & as I know you will bee glade to bee at it, I doe beg you both to bee in Town Sunday night or Munday morning very early: the perticulars I will inform you, if either of you will come to mee next Munday morning at eleven aclock as it is of soe great consequence, it must be kept secrett, till the time comes. I am

"Your very very [*sic*] humble Servant

"Somerset."

In spite of this flattering appeal, Sir Richard and his son, having made their excuses, remained at Clandon; and Somerset writes again on the 30th of June:

"Sir,—Since your own privatte affaires doe keep you in the Country, I will with great satisfaction tell you, that the House of Lords have this day voted an Address to the Queen to take effectuall care to remove the Pretender to Her Crown from the court of Lorrain, & all other Princes & States in amity and correspondence with Hers. This address wee have carryed, & is resolved to bee presented by the wholle House when Her Majesty will apoynt a time. Wee durst not send it down to your house least some untoward amendments might bee added, but if our friends will make the like motion in the House of Commons to morrow or Thursday, wee shall leave it to them . . . I am very sensible you will be glade to Hear what the

House of Lords have done this day, & to bee in the House of Commons when it is moved there: I doe therefore acquaint you with that by this night's post."

Somerset, who at this time was forty-one, had outdone everyone else in the marrying of money and influence, both of which he needed. His wife, Elizabeth Percy, held in her own right six of our most ancient baronies, and her wealth is incalculable. The Duke himself was not unfairly described as "witless" by Marlborough. He was a man of splendid appearance, looking well on a horse and exceedingly well in a stately ceremonial. That he should have written thus to the Onslows can be readily understood. The Queen was fond of him; and whatever may be said of his capacity as a politician, he was consistent in loyalty. What is more significant is that a man of such extreme aristocratic haughtiness that he was known as "the proud Duke" was on terms of close friendship with Onslow and his son. This alone proves my belief that Sir Richard Onslow had raised his family to a position from which real political eminence was attainable.

What was the business at Clandon which kept Sir Richard and his son so fully occupied that even the affairs of the nation were of less immediate importance? It is possible that these all-absorbing "privatte affaires" may have been the planning of a new house.

The decision to pull down the old house at Clandon and to build one in the fashionable style—a Palladian mansion—was one in which both father and son were vitally concerned. This decision was apparently made by Sir Richard Onslow in or before 1713, for in that year, according to the fifth Earl's private history of his family, the plans and contracts were already prepared.

But here one has to face more than one problem. The Palladian house of Clandon Park was the work, possibly the masterpiece, of Giacomo Leoni, a Venetian architect who came to England at some unknown date early in the eighteenth century. It has been assumed, very incautiously, that he may have come over at the invitation of Richard Boyle, third Earl of Burlington, to assist in the publication of Palladio's *Architecture*. This is most improbable. The first

edition of Leoni's Palladio, a costly and elaborate work with a series of magnificent engravings by Picard for which Leoni himself was entirely responsible, was published in 1715 and is clearly the result of many years' labour. But Richard Boyle was born in 1695; and if Leoni was in England as early as 1713 it seems unlikely that he would have come over on the invitation of a youth of seventeen or eighteen years of age. It is, however, true that Burlington, who had succeeded his father, the third Earl of Cork, in 1704, was a member of the Privy Council in 1714, and in 1715 was Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire and Lord High Treasurer of Ireland at the age of twenty. It is equally true that he altered and partly rebuilt Burlington House, Piccadilly, in 1716, but let it be observed that his architect for this work was Campbell, not Leoni.

The problem of the building of Leoni's house at Clandon Park is further complicated by the question of dates. If the plans of 1713 were those of Leoni, it is entirely incredible that the work should have taken twenty years before it was completed, unless it was interrupted for years at a time; and the date on the leaden rainwater-heads is 1733. The fifth Earl of Onslow states that the house was not finished until 1731; the *Dictionary of National Biography* gives (as an approximate date for the building) 1732; and Sir John Evelyn of Wotton described a visit to Clandon Park—almost certainly, though not conclusively, referring to the present house—in 1729.

With every allowance for contemporary methods, and the time occupied in demolishing the old house and in clearing the site (the stable block was not demolished until 1814), it seems very unlikely that the building of Clandon Park was begun much earlier than 1723-25: architecturally the plan is remarkably straightforward and by no means of extraordinary size, lacking all the more elaborate structural features of the Palladian style; and it should be remembered that Rysbrack, one of the collaborators in the decoration of the great hall, and probably elsewhere in the house, did not come to England until October 1720. It is also worthy of note that a reference to the house in the 1718-19 edition of

Aubrey's *Antiquities of Surrey* most unmistakably describes the old mansion. Moreover, the whole credit for building "the noble house at Clandon" is ungrudgingly given by Speaker Arthur to his cousin Thomas Onslow, whom he greatly disliked.

By 1713, the date which is given for "the first plans," Thomas Onslow had already married Elizabeth Knight, "the West India Fortune," whose money is supposed to have been sunk in the new house. This may or may not be true; there is no reason for supposing that such an accretion was necessary, for Sir Richard Onslow must have built up an amount of capital that would have been more than sufficient. The fact that does emerge from the consideration of these problems is that the idea of building the Palladian mansion, or a new house of some description, occurred in the first place to Sir Richard Onslow, and not to his son.

It may also be concluded that Leoni was not the architect who was originally employed on this design. The statement in a recent work on country houses that Clandon Park was "begun in 1715 for Richard, first Lord Onslow" is wholly untenable. Conjectures ought to be excluded from biography, but one may at least observe that the first English house known to have been erected by Leoni was Bramham Park. This was followed by Moor Park (1720) where, as at Clandon, Leoni had the experience of building upon a site originally occupied by a brick mansion. He then built in succession Queensberry House and Latham House (1721-1725), and, at some time between 1723 and 1732, the strictly Palladian front of Lyme Hall. In 1730 he was engaged upon Bold Hall in Lancashire. His last work was Barton Park in Sussex (1740). These dates, as well as those which I have previously cited, would certainly suggest that Clandon Park was built (as I believe it was) between 1723 and 1733. An architect tells me, however, that ten years is a period very much longer than would have been necessary for this work under normal conditions: the date 1725 for the beginning of the building is therefore entirely reasonable.

Onslow had acquired a town house in Soho Square presumably before the end of the seventeenth century. The

Square was then fashionable—Evelyn had a house there in 1689—though its respectability was much reduced in later times.

The establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty in 1714, and the entrenchment of the Whigs in a position that was able to resist and repel every attack upon the main body for nearly forty-eight years, lifted the Onslow family high indeed upon the tides of good fortune. When the King, the German George, arrived in England he naturally found his principal supporters and all his honest friends among the Whigs. Among these Whigs, Richard Onslow was presented to the King as "the most considerable country gentleman in the realm." This was perhaps going a little too far, but at least it can be said of Onslow that his adherence to his principles had always been a matter of true conviction, sometimes asserted with rage and rancour, not a fabricated instrument of policy. He was a Protestant, a monarchist and a great landowner. He had brought his family to a height from which capable and honest leadership would take them into a land of unlimited promise.

Whether in fact they showed the capacity and the honesty that would have enabled them to exploit fully and without reproach the splendid opportunities which lay before them in 1714 is perhaps open to question.

In 1717 the King visited Clandon (the old house), the first royal guest to be received in the home of the Onslows. This was on the 22nd of June. He came over from Hampton Court for an early dinner, and afterwards went up to the Downs to see the Guildford Races, a famous meeting established by his predecessor King William. Only three years previously Queen Anne, who loved racing, had entered a grey horse to run for the Ladies' Plate on Merrow Downs. It was "a fine circular course" and the races—in the general order of things—were run every year in Whitsun week, and always under the patronage of the Onslows.

Six months after this meeting, Richard Onslow died.

His character has perhaps been depicted adequately in the record of his life. He was a man of magnificence, not endowed with loftiness of mind or manner, but sterling and

effectual. What he did was done with assurance and a solemn splendour. Evelyn relates how, in 1698, he "treated almost all the gentlemen of Surrey" at Clandon. His temper, especially when his faith and honour were in question, could be explosive and unreflecting.

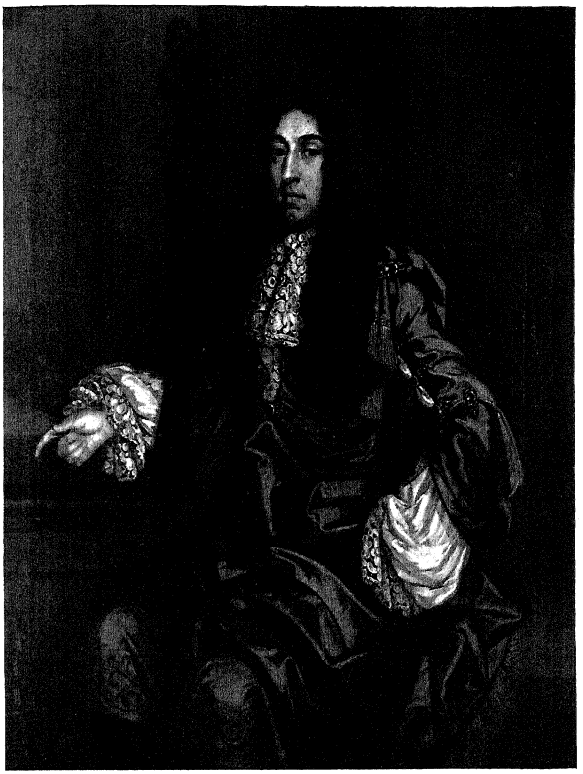
In 1703 he fought a duel with young Lewis Oglethorpe, the member for Haslemere, a young Tory with Jacobite inclinations. The occasion of this brawl, according to Evelyn, was "some words which passed at a Committee of the House." Richard was then close upon fifty and Oglethorpe was not twenty-two. The young man was wounded and disarmed.

Nor was this the only occasion when Onslow sought or provoked a duel. Had it not been for the order of the House he would have crossed swords with Sir Edward Seymour. It is indeed on record that the House intervened on several occasions between Onslow and Seymour, a fiery fellow who had been Speaker before him.

The advice and opinion of Onslow were always respected, and he had the reputation of being kind as well as trustworthy. Among the Clandon papers there is a note written to him by Lord Hervey on the Fenwick affair in 1706. This notable case was brought before the King's Bench in 1703 and was a dispute between Mrs. Fenwick and her husband concerning the disposal of an estate after the death of their only son, who died without issue. The suit was apparently prolonged and complicated by the death of Mr. Fenwick himself.

> "Since my last," wrote Hervey, "Mrs. Fenwick has wrote to me & desires (in wch I think she is wrong) to be totally left free . . . & prayes you wd please to represent her as resolved to be under no Tye to do any thing therein—"

Of Lord Onslow's brother, Foot or Foote Onslow, the father of the great Speaker Arthur Onslow, and the direct ancestor of the present family, very little is known. He was born in 1655, matriculated at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, in 1672, and in due course became a member of the Levant Company and lived for some years in Turkey—possibly in



(*Photograph : A. C. Cooper Ltd.*)

Richard, First Baron Onslow (1654-1717). By Sir Godfrey Kneller. From the picture in the possession of the Earl of Onslow.

Smyrna, where his uncle Richard would have been well known. But instead of making a fortune, the customary Onslow procedure, he lost money. He returned to England before 1688 and served in William's Convention Parliament as a member for Guildford. The fifth Earl has recorded in his MS. family history that Foote Onslow represented Guildford in "several Parliaments of King William." In 1701 he retired from Parliament and his place was taken by his prosperous uncle Denzil of Pyrford.

Foote Onslow was appointed a Commissioner of Excise in 1694, and in 1699 he was promoted to First Commissioner. We are told by his son Arthur that he was "a sensible and worthy man, well bred, modest and very brave." His wife, whom he married in 1687, was Susannah, the daughter of Thomas Anlaby of Etton near Hull and the widow of Arnold Colwall: she is exceptional among the Onslow wives in not being an heiress. Finally comes the astonishing information that Foote Onslow died in 1710 "in embarrassed circumstances" at the age of fifty-five. Had he been deeply concerned in the loss of the Turkish fleet in 1694 "to the almost utter ruin of that trade"?

His portrait at Clandon shows him as a plump, ruddy man dressed in a plain brown suit with many buttons. He wears a handsome lace cravat and ruffles. Were his history unknown, it might well be taken for the portrait of a shrewd and exceedingly prosperous merchant. The face is kindly, firm and open, and of a most engaging manliness.

The record of this worthy but unfortunate man, though brief, is not a little surprising. In view of the great wealth of his uncle Denzil and his brother Richard, how is it that he was allowed to die "in embarrassed circumstances" at the age of fifty-five? (Denzil, it will be remembered, did not die till 1720.) Is it because of his failure to be successful that he was disregarded by the rest of the family?—and is it also for this reason that no documents of his are to be found among the Clandon archives?

No doubt the implication of any such questioning is extremely distasteful; and affirmative answers would belie what is known of Sir Richard Onslow and the squire of

Pyrford. At the same time, the clean and honest character of the unhappy Foote makes it hard to understand why the family did not come to his help, and why he passes through the Onslow record so inconspicuously. Even the dates and circumstances of his life in Turkey seem to be entirely unknown; and there is no account of what he did in the nine years between his political retirement and his death. One does not even know where he lived. His importance and celebrity consist in one fact alone—that he was the father of the greatest of the Onslows.

CHAPTER IV

Augustan England

THE story of the rise and decline of the Onslows is a story of the eighteenth century; just as the story of their relapse and their happy revival is a story of the nineteenth.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the family was representative of the aristocratic Whigs, typically associated with the acceleration of liberal ideas and the accumulation of wealth by trade, as well as by a series of profitable marriages, and still resting securely upon the basis of their Presbyterian origins. Their proximity to London, which then contained about one-tenth of the whole population of England, was also an immense advantage.

But the political and social patterns of the country were shifting and variable. The Jacobite or quasi-Tory factions were powerful and obstinate, and it should be remembered that the doctrine of the Protestant Succession, while it was justified by one of the basic principles of the English monarchy, flagrantly violated the principle of descent.

During the reign of Queen Anne it was fashionable, among the loftier but less intellectual Tories, to compare Charles I with Christ; a strange and repulsive blasphemy which indicates what may happen when religion is travestied and reason expelled. In the Bodleian Library at Oxford there were two pictures: one of them representing the death of Christ, and the other (its companion) showing the execution of Charles the Martyr. Thus the Jacobite infatuation was a menace, not only from without, but also from within. It was combined, sometimes honestly, with the antagonism between the High Church party and the Dissenters, and between the older county families and the swiftly emergent aristocracy of the Whigs, amongst whom the Onslows were now in a prominent, though not a leading position.

All this is part of a strange complex of social change which has to be considered if we are to understand the strategic position of the Onslow family: a family which then stood, in the most unmistakable way, for the higher levels of the new order.

The first three decades of the eighteenth century were those of a rhyming, jesting, witty and irreligious age. The more florid splendours of the Renaissance were collapsing and the people were set upon a return to more sober manners, represented in literature and architecture by a move towards classical austerity, and in poetry by a correct elegance of expression. But the reaction from the Baroque style and the Stuart immorality was not accompanied by the revival of religion. On the contrary, the initial temper of the eighteenth century was patently materialistic. And so, despite the noble example of Joseph Butler, the discourses of the godly Clarke, the fervent reasoning of William Law, the gentle morality of Shaftesbury and of Hutcheson, the orthodox faith was in a state of melancholy decline—indeed, of pale decrepitude.

This was accompanied by a degree of corruption in public affairs that was vitiating the whole field of political life; in which, to their great credit, the Onslows were not yet participators.

The Onslow family certainly represented one of the notable tendencies of those times in their desire to build the largest possible houses, to live in the stateliest and, one must add, the most ostentatious way. The craze for building in the new style, the Burlington style, possibly reached a climax about 1730, and invited the satire of Pope and Young. In his *Love of Fame*, Young sends an arrow in the direction of Chandos and Burlington:

> "*Belus* with solid *glory* will be crown'd;
> He buys no Phantome, no vain empty sound,
> But *builds* himself a name; and to be great,
> Sinks in a Quarry an immense estate."

Pope, while respecting, and indeed imitating, the taste of Burlington, refers to the blunderers who

> "—call the winds thro' long arcades to roar,
> Proud to catch cold at a *Venetian* door."

Although Pope lived within easy distance of Clandon, it would be going too far to suppose that his reference to Villario's "ten years' toil" or the house where "a hundred footsteps scrape the marble Hall" were even remotely connected with Lord Onslow's Palladian mansion: they have in view a larger target.

The barriers or curtains between the classes, especially between the merchants and the aristocracy, were beginning to disappear, although rank was never more assertive. Whereas the burial of a poor man cost little more than four or five shillings, that of a Duke ran to at least fifty pounds; which was not much more than the price of a really first-rate wig or flowing Falbala. For this was the age of the professional beau, with his clouded cane, his periwig of women's hair (whores' hair), his long and awkward sword, his quizzing glass or "pocket perspective," his elegant snuff-box (often with a spring lid and the miniature of a courtesan), a brush for his eyebrows and a pick for his teeth.

His female counterpart, the belle, had not acquired the magnificence of a later style, and her dress does not bear comparison with the full-blown splendour, the vast and lovely extravagance of the two decades from 1760 to 1780. But she is to be noted for making fashionable the Indian stuffs, then a novelty: baguzees, gorgorans, seersuckers, deribands, niccannees, humhums, garnacs, tepoys, periascoes, pallampores, mulmuls, brawles and allejars. She darkened her hair with a leaden comb. She was fond of cordials made at home in the still-room; and even the richest and the noblest only changed their linen when it became impossible to walk into good society without doing so. Cleanliness, in the modern sense, hardly existed at all, and the use of scent —lavender, bergamot, benjamin, jessamine, coriander— was almost compulsory in any assembly where the noses were tolerably well-bred.

Apart from the normal exercise of the human passions, her emotions were perpetually stimulated by gambling: not indeed a feature peculiar to this time, but then carried to an excess that was never equalled. The fine lady seldom spent a day without her games of ombre, whisk or lanterloo. Her

conversation, if Swift is to be trusted, was unbelievably inane, consisting almost entirely of catch-words or current phrases or the proverbs of the people.

Little pages in rich liveries, their parentage not infrequently the object of scandalous rumour, were treated with ambiguous affection by their employers; while the "India Blacks," the negroes found in every large household, were so much addicted to running away that many of them wore metal collars riveted on their necks and bearing the names and addresses of their owners.

As the lower servants of a great house were treated less well than the dogs of the establishment, it is not surprising that masters and mistresses were cheated, robbed and deceived in every possible way. The maids, if they were pretty, were not expected to resist the advances of the master of the house or those of his sons. Thus a high degree of comeliness and loyalty among the retainers or tenants was often directly due to a liberal transfusion of his lordship's own blood. There were of course some instances where the maids outwitted the masters and there were scandalous marriages with younger sons, and even with minors, which had to be undone if such undoing were possible.

As I have already said, the sharper distinctions between the classes were disappearing. Particularly at the watering-places or the spas there was an unavoidable slackening of convention; although a gentleman felt that he was justified if he cut, when in London, the unassuming merchant with whom he had amicably drunk the waters of Tunbridge or Bath. These relaxations were already beginning to make the more rigid of the sticklers appear somewhat ridiculous.

And even in London, where social privilege had to be jealously preserved by the courtiers, men of different classes were able to meet each other in the coffee houses. (Arthur Onslow, the Speaker, used to sit in the chimney corner of the Jew's Harp "about a quarter of a mile north of Portland House," until his identity was discovered by the landlord.)

These early decades of the century were the supreme period of the London coffee houses, of which the more respectable were sometimes elevated to the standing of clubs.

And certainly, when you entered the coffee house you found yourself in a cheerful, warm and enlivening promiscuity. The line of pots was ranged in front of an open fire, the mistress or "bar keeper" stood in her little enclosure; wearing an overall, but with hair neatly dressed in the prevailing fashion. If the mistress were a handsome and amusing woman, her charm and her merry talk were powerful attractions; and there might be a brace or two of young girls who appeared, with little ambiguity, on the staircase which led to the upper rooms.

The benches were hard, the tables not over-clean, but the company was excellent. In some of the coffee houses (Will's and White's, for example) men of letters, wits, gamblers, politicians gathered about them a congenial group of listeners or debaters, and so, in time, the different houses acquired a distinctive character. There was even a coffee house that was habitually patronised by the clergy. Nor was coffee the only drink obtainable in these places. Brandy, rum and arrack were mingled in steaming bowls of punch; while those who liked something milder could be supplied with a cooling glass of sherbet.

There was also a community of interest in music and opera. It was the beginning of that singular conflict between the Handelian and Italian styles which became an aspect of the conflict between political and royal factions, between the Haymarket and Lincoln's Inn. The advocates of dull morality were trying to reform the theatre and abolish the scintillating lewdness of the comedy and the pasquinade. So far they were not very successful.

In literature, the age was one of unsurpassed achievement. Steele and Addison were advocating good morals in better prose. Pope's *Iliad* was finished in 1720. Swift was at the height of his diabolical powers. Gay, Arbuthnot and William King showed what could be done in the lighter forms of parody and satire; while Berkeley, Toland and Whiston combined a sonorous excellence of style with a blinding subtlety of disquisition.

Below the splendour of the upper structure there was much that was bloody, brutal and revolting. Bears and bulls

were baited, cock-fighting was a popular sport patronised by noblemen: the gentlemen of Cambridge and Essex matched their birds in savage battle against the gentlemen of Surrey and London. But the state of the working classes, though deteriorating, was not unendurable: the tragedies of human degradation in England belong to the later part of the century, when the increase of population was enormously accelerated. At the time of Queen Anne the total population of the whole country could have been little more than six millions.

Politically, the scene from the accession of Anne (1702) to the death of George I (1727) is extremely complicated. It would have been less complicated if the Georgian Whigs could have acted as a simple unanimous party, and if the King himself had not been personally so unpopular; but the lack of unanimity among the Whigs, fortunately for them, was equally marked among their rivals, more particularly in the reign of Queen Anne. It was an age of political opportunism, of which the most flagrant and unabashed example is that of Marlborough: a man whose reptilian baseness in court intrigue has to be set against his genius in the field.

To be loyal to the Whigs, without being dangerously conspicuous, was the happy fortune of Sir Richard Onslow. Neither his office nor his inclination thrust him into the central activities of his group. At the same time a friendship with Newcastle after 1714 (which became a family tradition, even more firmly established by alliance) kept him in a good place on the party register, and I have been able to show that he was a man of some consideration with Somerset as well.

All the political oscillations of the reign of Queen Anne left him untouched and secure. Those fantastic devilries which made young St. John, a freethinker, take sides with the High Church party, while his friend and enemy, Harley, gave a private impetus to the plotting of Mrs. Masham, were not such things as were to be tolerated in the camp of the Whigs. Even Marlborough, the most experienced veteran of intrigue, found himself unable to prevail against "the malice of a bedchamber woman." When the Whigs made the fatal blunder of prosecuting Sacheverell and the

chief ministers of the party were dismissed by Anne, Onslow was in the nominally uncommitted position of Speaker. Again, in 1713 when the Queen was ill and Oxford (Harley) was ready to get in touch with James, while Ormonde was known to be corresponding with the Pretender, Onslow and his son (as we have seen) were exceptionally busy on the estate at Clandon.

And when that ill-mannered royal cuckold, George I, came over in 1714 the position of the loyal Tories—and there were many of them—was clearly desperate. Within a little time St. John (Bolingbroke) was in the service of the Pretender, and Oxford was in the Tower, although it was not then known that he had been in correspondence with James. (Oxford was released from the Tower in 1717: Bolingbroke was allowed to return to England in 1723, but was excluded from his seat in the House of Lords.) Robert Walpole, before long to become the leading figure in English politics, had already observed the shrewdness, wit and intelligence of the Princess of Wales, Caroline of Brandenburgh Ansbach, who was thirty-one at the time of her father-in-law's accession, and was preparing to secure her friendship and support—an example of strategy combined with honourable affection and the understanding of a congenial mind.

The King's ugly foreign appearance and his ungraceful devotion to the ruder pleasures of life, his dislike of England and his love of Hanover, his inability to speak English and his limited control of French and Latin, were circumstances which could be more easily tolerated by the bluffer Whigs, the men of land and wealth, but, in the words of Leadam, "drove wits and men of letters into opposition." At the beginning of the reign the cleavage between the Whigs and the Tories was greatly accentuated, the more so as the Whigs had obviously secured a monopoly of the royal favour. In addition, they had virtually secured the control of the realm, for the King was never present at the Cabinet meetings; and if he had been present, he could not have understood what was going on.

At the same time, the general temper of the country was

overwhelmingly Protestant (though the term Protestant has to be understood in a political rather than a religious use) and the people greatly preferred the coarseness and uncouthness of their Hanoverian King to the treacherous and lecherous elegance of a Stuart.

The Jacobite rising of 1715 reduced the opposition of the Parliamentary groups and was easily suppressed. It is true that Jacobitism was not extinguished—in one form or another it has never been extinguished—but it ceased for a time to be a source of concern to the Government. No sensible man could have supposed that a second "restoration" was possible: the military force of Scotland might indeed be involved (as it was in "the Forty-five") but the people of England were still in the habit of looking upon the Scots as a barbarous and alien race. It was not the Jacobites who were the curse of England in the eighteenth century, but the wars in Europe; the bloodiness of which was only equalled by the triviality and intricacy of their alleged causes.

There was a slightly disturbing revelation in 1721-22 when a Jacobite conspiracy was discovered, led by the Bishop of Rochester, Atterbury (for many years an open and enthusiastic Jacobite), and supported by the Duke of Norfolk, Lord North and Grey, and Lord Orrery. A Mr. Layer, who had enlisted men to fight for the Pretender, was hanged and quartered: an effective way of checking any other misguided recruiters who might otherwise have been active.

England under the Whigs appeared to be entering upon a period of settlement and ease at home. If George I was a sensualist, he was at least a sensualist of the dogged unromantic sort, well contented with his Maypole and his Elephant—the lean Schulenburg (Duchess of Kendal) and the megalopygous Kilmansegge (Countess of Darlington). These were the official mistresses, kept as a necessary part of the royal household, and of no more consequence than a couple of mares in the royal mews.

The whole concept of royalty was undergoing a change, and eventually a change for the better. Queen Anne had represented or revived for the last time the quasi-divine, miracle-working status of the royal person, a strange residue

of paganism particularly dear to the Stuarts. Nobody could have seen any striking manifestation of divinity in George I, and although he was a man whom the most ardent royalist cannot very well admire, I think it may be said that what was lost in romance and illusion (and superstition) was less important than what was gained in common sense.

The year of Bubbles (1720) badly shook the reputation of British finance. Many private reputations were shaken as well, and even the cautious Onslows dabbled in the stock of the South Sea Company—a stock which rocketed up in June to the fantastic figure of £1060. For the organisation of this Company, which proposed a reduction of the National Debt in return for the absolute control of the Spanish trade, Harley (in 1711) was responsible. The crash of the Company brought misery and ruin to thousands. Stanhope, who shared with Sunderland the responsibility of Government, died of shock; Craggs, the Secretary of State, died of terror; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Aislabie, was sent to the Tower. But this Company was not the only one that lured the crazy speculator: there was a company for "carrying out an undertaking of great advantage, but nobody to know what it is," another for "importing jackasses from Spain" (surely most unnecessary), and yet another for placing perpetual motion on the market. Those for "trading in human hair" and "fishing up wrecks" were at any rate more plausible.

Arthur Onslow, later to be the Speaker, and his cousin, Lord Onslow of Clandon, were both implicated in South Sea transactions. Their part in these transactions will be considered later.

One result of the South Sea disaster was to bring Walpole into power as the leading minister: a post which, in spite of turmoil and opposition within his own party, he held for twenty-one years. The rise of Walpole to power was of the greatest importance to the Onslow family, though not in a manner which could then (in 1721) have been anticipated.

Never had a county family with a strong political interest been in a more advantageous position. From 1664 they had been unwavering Whigs, in principle if not in name. From

a much earlier period they had been among the ranks of the Presbyterians and the Puritans. When the Hanoverian succession was established they had been singled out for royal favour and were the masters of a splendid estate. They had acquired wealth as well as distinction. Their political connexions were such as to justify the hopes of a rise to high eminence in the affairs of the country. Nothing stood in the way; nothing more was requisite—nothing, that is, except ability.

Clandon might well have become one of the great political centres of the kingdom. A great house was being built, or was contemplated, in the most handsome of the modern styles. This noble mansion was within easy reach of Hampton Court or Kensington. It was in one of the most important areas of one of the most important of English counties. A man living in this house, with all the additional advantages that were now possessed by the Onslows, could have set himself on an equal footing among the greatest of the political families of England; not by virtue of eminent ancestry, but by virtue of an accumulation of privileges and of temporal opportunity such as few men have ever enjoyed.

The Onslow family had been led to this position, as I have tried to show, by the good fortune, the considerable ability and the principles of the first Lord Onslow. When he died in 1717 it was to be expected that his son, Thomas, who had at least added substantially to the family wealth and succeeded his father as Lord Lieutenant of the county (a post which he held, with no memorable distinction, until his death), would now secure for the name of Onslow something far wider than provincial renown.

Any such expectation was illusory. The second Lord Onslow, though he was not incapable, and in many ways an interesting character, did not possess any of those qualities which raise a man to the highest honours or expose him to the dangers of resounding public disgrace. His importance and influence were local, and were not of such an order as to give him a place in our *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Here the name of Onslow might have lapsed into obscurity had it not been for a still inconspicuous young man, the

son of the unsuccessful and unhappy Foote Onslow, who died "in embarrassed circumstances" just before the temporary return of the Tories in 1710.

This inconspicuous and rather timid young man represented the borough of Guildford in 1720, when he was twenty-nine years old. His name was Arthur Onslow, and he it was, not his magnificent though ineffectual cousin of Clandon, who gave the name of Onslow its highest and most unassailable place in English history.

Meanwhile there had occurred a melancholy event in the family records, for the widow of the first Baron Onslow drowned herself in a pond at Croydon.

CHAPTER V

Dicky Ducklegs

IN the eighteenth century the Onslow family was echeloned in two lines: on the one side are the three Barons of Clandon, whose line ended when the third Baron died without issue in 1776; and on the other are Foote Onslow and his descendants, the Speaker Arthur Onslow and his son the first Earl, who are the direct progenitors of the present family.

Too long in the body, too large in the posteriors, too short in the legs: these were the anatomical features which distinguished the second Lord Onslow. His full-length portrait at Clandon shows him as a man with a plain, smooth, pompous face; not the face of one who is likely to be distinguished in great affairs or brilliant enterprise.

I have already suggested (and it is indeed sufficiently evident) that the opportunities which lay before this man were almost unlimited. He was about thirty-seven when, in 1717, he succeeded his father. He had met the King and was assured of a good reception at Court. In 1705, when on his travels, he was present at the wedding of George (afterwards George II) to Caroline of Ansbach. His family, though not of high distinction in the history of England or among those of ancient rank, was now in a position of almost unrivalled advantage. It represented, in a divided and restless nation, everything that was acceptable to the new dynasty. Whatever else the Onslows may or may not have been at that time, they had rightly earned the reputation since the days of Sir Arthur of being thoroughly dependable Whigs.

The new Baron was a man of great wealth, to which he had added by marrying a fortune. He had been a Member of Parliament, inconspicuously, since he was a young man of

twenty or twenty-two. It is true that he had not succeeded in forming any close political alliances; but he was now (in 1717) Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, High Steward of Guildford and a Teller of the Exchequer. He was also an Outranger of Windsor Forest; and what is more—though it seems fantastically inappropriate—an LL.D. of the University of Cambridge. At a somewhat later date he was Deputy Lieutenant for Westminster. He had assumed, or was granted, the leadership of the gentlemen of Surrey, though not without considerable dissatisfaction and even bitterness among the older county families, such as the Mores, Westons and Oglethorpes.

Here, then, was a magnificent opportunity for the man who, in reference to his peculiar build and waddling progress, came to be known as Dicky Ducklegs. And here was a man for whom the opportunity was nothing more than an occasion for provincial aggrandisement. Is it possible that his wife may have been a retarding influence, though not the only one?

The wife of Dicky Ducklegs, Elizabeth Knight, is a woman of whom very little is known; an observation which applies, very significantly, to the women of the Onslow family in general. She is described by the fifth Earl of Onslow as belonging to "a well-known Jamaica family." Who, in fact, were known in those days as "Jamaica families," and for what reason?

This is a matter which may, I think, be discussed briefly: it obviously has a direct bearing upon the family status.

The island of Jamaica was captured, almost inadvertently, in 1655, by a Cromwellian expedition. This expedition was under the command of Admiral Sir William Penn, the Quaker's father, who had privately offered his fleet to the prospective King (then in exile). But sailors have to do as they are told, and in 1654 he was sent, with Venables, to the West Indies, in order to worry the Spaniards, rob their ships, and above all to seize the rich and useful island of San Domingo. The attack on San Domingo was beaten off with lamentable losses to the invaders, but this was not enough to break the spirit or blunt the resolve of such a man as

Penn. Without orders, although with commendable enterprise, he landed the forces of Venables on Jamaica (May 1655) which he captured without very much trouble.

Hoping for compliments, rewards or promotion, and probably for all three, he then sailed for England. His reception by Cromwell surprised him very considerably. He was arrested and sent off, with a storm of anger buzzing in his ears, to the Tower. This might have been anticipated, for Penn was guilty of treacherous correspondence, of having failed in his mission, of having acted without orders and returned without leave.

However, the island of Jamaica passed into British control, and it was not long before English families, and among them the Knights, were speeding over to an acquisition that was obviously full of promise. This move—it was almost a rush—began very soon after the capture of the island. Some of those who went across were political refugees, many of them former Cromwellians, but the greater number were traders and adventurers; by no means people worthy of the highest respect. None would appear to have been distinguished in any particular way or to have differed from the general type of those who used to exploit acquisitions of territory.

In an eighteenth-century history of the island we are informed with great candour: "Although the gaol delivery of Newgate is not poured in upon this island; yet it is an occasional asylum for many who have deserved the gallows. These fellows are no sooner arrived than they cheat away to the right and left, and off again they start; carrying all away with them, except the infamy of their proceedings, which they leave behind." The story of European colonisation is remarkably uniform.

That the settlers were successful, in at least one respect, is to be gathered from the export figures. These reached the value of £629,533 in 1698; in 1720 they were up to £1,117,576; and were heading towards four millions by the end of the century. The trade, which depended upon the labour of negroes, creoles, mixed whites and other unclassified varieties, was mainly concerned with sugar,

rum, molasses, piemento, coffee, cotton wool, indigo, ginger, tobacco, mahogany and logwood.

The branch of the Knight family from which Elizabeth was descended appears to have been mercantile, and we know that in 1706 she was living in the house of a City merchant, Humfrey South. It is stated that she inherited two fortunes: one from her father and one from a childless uncle, described as "Colonel Knight." This Colonel Knight is probably the Charles Knight whose name appears in 1691 as that of an island Councillor, who was afterwards (in 1696) given the command of Port Royal. The fifth Earl of Onslow refers to him as "the Hon. Charles Knight of Kingston in Jamaica," and to his brother, the father of Elizabeth, as "the Hon. John Knight": I do not know from what sources he derives this information. There was also a Sir Andrew Knight who was chief Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Jamaica and Custos Rotulorum of Clarendon. All the information that I can add (and it amounts to little) is that a Mr. Ralph Knight's widow and niece were among those killed in the earthquake of the 7th of June 1692. What is at least clear is that the Knights were present in the island in considerable force by the end of the seventeenth century.

Now, Elizabeth Knight is important in more ways than one. She brought a fortune to Dicky Ducklegs. Did she at the same time bring a handicap?

The well-painted life-size portrait of Elizabeth Onslow at Clandon (possibly from the studio of Kneller) is not very communicative: it is not the kind of portrait that is able, as many are, to speak unambiguously for itself. You would say that she was neither well-bred nor vulgar, neither attractive nor ugly, rather homely than aristocratic, and certainly unfashionable. Whatever she may have been, it seems doubtful whether she could have taken her place with ease in the higher ranks of society. She could have done well enough, one may suppose, as the unpretentious wife of a country squire, busy with her store-cupboard and her still-room. As the wife of a man of rank who could have secured a high position in the State if he had been guided and

impelled by the social prestige and adroit manœuvres of a well-bred and fascinating woman, Elizabeth Knight could only have been a failure, possibly an encumbrance.

She had been married for money. In return, she had become the wife of a Baronet's son and heir, and she was the mistress, though only for a year or two, of the great house at Clandon, partly built with her wealth. She was, in the words of Speaker Arthur Onslow, "a Woman of the truest goodness of Mind and Heart I ever knew." In 1731 she died, leaving behind her one son, a youth of eighteen.

According to family tradition, Elizabeth Onslow was not a happy woman. Probably this tradition is not far from the truth. And those of an imaginative disposition may like to know that Elizabeth is the Clandon ghost. Her pale unfashionable spirit wanders in the gentlest way, a sad whispering wraith in silver brocade, along the gallery above the hall. . . .

Nothing that is known of Ducklegs himself produces even a transient impression of amiability. His claim to social acceptance would seem to depend upon the talents of a clown. He had, according to his cousin Arthur (who had no reason to like him), some capacity for liveliness, a limited knowledge of the world, and a gentlemanly taste for the "magnificence" that was proper to his position. But he was wrong-headed and rude and awkward. In the South Sea transaction with Arthur he was despicably mean. It has been alleged that a contract of marriage with Thomas Onslow was produced by Lady Harriet Vere, which he offered to buy back for £5000 in cash and a handsome annuity. Scandal (like the anonymous letter) frequently presents a distorted variation of truth and should always be received with due appreciation—and even with gratitude. In any case, the association of Onslow's name with that of Lady Harriet Vere is worthy of note.

His previous biographer, the fifth Earl of Onslow, can say little in his favour, except that he had "a talent for buffoonery," a thing hardly to be reckoned among the highest accomplishments of a gentleman. Writing to her mother on the 3rd of March 1737, Mrs. Delany refers to him on

(*Photograph : A. C. Cooper Ltd.*)

Elizabeth Knight, afterwards wife of Thomas, Second Baron Onslow. From the picture in the possession of the Earl of Onslow. (Artist unknown.)

the occasion of Queen Caroline's birthday celebrations at Hampton Court (*Autobiography*, 1861-62):

> "The King looked in good humour . . . he was excessively fine on the Birthday, and the Princess Amelia's clothes very beautiful. There was nothing else remarkable, but that my Lord Onslow was very near being demolished; he went to help some ladys into the foreigners box, his foot slipped, and he tumbled backward among all the crowd, and had like to have beat Princess Mary off her seat. He lay sprawling some time before he could recover himself, and caused much mirth throughout the assembly, the King and Queen laughed heartily."

Neither performance nor audience appears worthy of rational admiration; and this episode of sprawling in royal company, however funny it may have been, is unfortunately the only picture that we have of Ducklegs in the world of high fashion.

Thomas Onslow greatly enlarged his estate by the purchase of land in Surrey: he acquired Guildford Park and divided it into four farms. He was also concerned in the promotion of insurance companies, particularly the Royal Exchange Assurance Corporation.

His popularity with George I and George II gave him an assured position at Court, where, like a later Thomas Onslow, he seems to have endeared himself as a grotesque. Although he had no place in contemporary politics he was provincially eminent in Surrey, and especially in his own district—that of Guildford.

In 1722 the town was visited by the King (George I):

> "On his Majesty's Return from his Progress, he was met at Guilford by great Numbers of the Nobility and Gentry, who were led by the Lord Onslow. When he arrived at Guilford the Recorder welcom'd him in a very handsome Speech, and presented his Majesty with a Plum-Cake, which it seems is the usual Present to the Sovereign when he passes through that Town."

When George II succeeded his father on the throne of England (1727) Lord Onslow became a more accomplished courtier. Not only did he keep on excellent terms with the King and Queen, but he ingratiated himself most adroitly

with Frederick, Prince of Wales, their Majesties' detestable son. The Prince was described by his father as "my dear first-born . . . the greatest ass and the greatest liar and the greatest *canaille* and the greatest beast in the whole world"; while his mother declared roundly, "Fred is a nauseous little beast, and he cares for nobody but his nauseous little self." Parents are sometimes united by their children, though seldom by a sentiment so genuinely reciprocal.

Fred had been brought up in the stupid and licentious court of Hanover. He came to England early in 1728 and was created Prince of Wales in January 1729. In the May of that year he visited Clandon Park. The Prince's visit to Clandon—the new Palladian house, probably not yet completed—was described by Sir John Evelyn of Wotton (quoted in the Clandon MSS.):

> "Being invited by my Lord Onslow I went on horseback to Clandon about twelve o'clock. About one came the Prince of Wales from Kensington in an open Berlin . . . as soon as he had new dress'd himself he walkt round part of the garden & into the Orangery in the midst of a Wilderness of Greens . . . then he went into the great roome above stairs to dinner . . . there were seven piramids of sweetmeats & fruit & five dishes between each . . . the company consisted of about forty, ye chief of which were the Lord Chancellor King, the dukes of St. Albans & Ancaster . . . the Speaker Mr. Onslow . . . Mr. North Lord Guildford's son, Mr. Boscawen . . . dinner being over between four and five his Royal Highness after speaking to Lady Onslow & some other ladys . . . mounted a grey horse & was follow'd by most of the company to Meroe downs where he got into the Stand,—five horses ran. . . ."

The great Speaker Arthur Onslow was there: he had been in the Chair for about a year and a half. Much fine company was there, including the Duchess of Bedford and Lady Essex, both of whom sat with Frederick in the stand on the race-course. But Lady Onslow, the homely and inconspicuous Elizabeth, does not seem, to have cut much of a figure. She was "spoken to" by the Prince of Wales before he went off with his grander ladies, and that was all. . . .

Lord Onslow was concerned in very different ways in two very different cases. He was shot off his horse by a murderous

though probably instructed lunatic in 1723, and he played a leading part in what may be called the Tofts Enquiry (one of the most extraordinary hoaxes of any time) in 1726. The shooting affair, one of great interest and of many implications, will be described in the next chapter. Our immediate concern is with Mary Tofts, "the Woman of Godlyman."

Mary Tofts or Toft was the wife of John Tofts, a journeyman clothier. She lived in Godalming and had three children. At the time of her celebrity she was about twenty-five. She was poor, humble and exceedingly dishonest; but she has a place in the records of our island as an imaginative and successful impostor whose fantastic deception excited controversy, rage and astonishment throughout the entire realm and ultimately demanded the intervention of the Crown itself.

The Tofts imposture began with a declaration by Mary in November 1726. According to her, she was at work in the fields on the 23rd of April in that year and was very strangely frightened (one cannot say precisely how) by a rabbit. It is to be presumed that she also declared herself to be pregnant at this time. However that may be, the alarming appearance of the rabbit was to have consequences of a very peculiar nature.

Attended by John Howard, an apothecary, Mary was delivered, first of the guts of a pig (a strange irrelevance) and then of a litter of fifteen rabbits. It does not seem that Howard was present at the actual event, but he had been fully convinced of the presence of the rabbits by the ordinary methods of palpation.

It seems incredible that anyone, let alone men of sense and science, could have believed in such a fable for a single moment. But Howard was deceived, and was presently active in propagating deception from one end of the country to the other. Where were the rabbits? What was the evidence of Mr. John Tofts, if he was at home? In fact, what evidence was there of any description apart from the word of Mary herself? These were questions that were soon to be investigated by Lord Onslow.

In the meanwhile Howard wrote to St. André, a physician

of much eminence who was then practising in Westminster Hospital. Upon getting this report, St. André at once posted off to Guildford with his friend Samuel Molyneux, whose qualification was that of secretary to the Prince of Wales.

One might have supposed that the whole affair would now be shown as a peculiarly nauseating fraud. On the contrary, St. André himself became the victim of imposture. He drew up *A Short Narrative of an Extraordinary Delivery of Rabbets*, in which he deposed that he himself had delivered Mrs. Tofts of two rabbits, *or portions of rabbits*.

Lord Onslow wrote a slightly guarded letter to Sir Hans Sloane, a man advanced in years and of great learning. In this letter he declared that the Godalming rabbits were acquiring dreadful celebrity: the affair had "almost alarmed England, and in a manner persuaded several people of sound judgment that it was true." Pope recorded the conflict of opinion in the whole of London. In the royal circle there were many believers, despite the wholesome ribaldry of the Prince of Wales.

The King now decided that it was necessary to confirm or demolish the assertion of Mary Tofts and her babbling supporters. He therefore sent no less a person than Ahlers, one of the surgeons of the royal household, to Guildford.

Now,—now at last, you would suppose, the horrible imposture of Mary Tofts would be exploded. But it was not long before Ahlers found himself extracting pieces of rabbit. . . . And still the wonder grew. The great surgeon returned to the royal household, where he said that he was unable to give a definite explanation.

Mary was now prepared to go on producing any number of rabbits, and would no doubt have done so had it not been for the decisive intervention of Limborch and Sir Richard Manningham, both of whom were dispatched by the King. What happened then may be described in the words of the *Daily Post* of the 6th of December 1726:

> "No notice hath hitherto been taken in this Paper of the Woman at Godalmin in Surrey, said to have been deliver'd of sixteen or seventeen Rabbits, it being a filthy Story at best, and having withal the Appearance of Imposture: That Matter is now under strict Exam-

ination, and some odd Discoveries having been made, we hear the said Woman was yesterday committed by Sir Thomas Clarges to the Custody of the High Constable of Westminster for a Fortnight, it being pretended that she is near her Labour (as they call it) of more Rabbits now jumping in her Belly (as the phrase is) otherwise she had been sent to Bridewell."

Manningham had at once detected the imposture, and after Mary Tofts was taken to London she was actually caught endeavouring to procure a rabbit.

Onslow was now directed to obtain sworn depositions from witnesses in Godalming as well as Guildford, and this was accordingly done. Nothing remained of the rabbits and the story of their alleged mother. Under the minatory countenance of Sir Thomas Clarges the magistrate, Mary Tofts made a full confession. Although she was sent to the Bridewell in Tothill Fields and a prosecution was demanded, it was thought better to drop the case, which had already impaired or reduced several important reputations.

Mary Tofts returned to Godalming and for some years nothing was heard of her until, in 1740, she was imprisoned for receiving stolen goods. In 1763 she died, having secured for herself a sure and certain place in the annals of roguery. She was commemorated at the time in a series of lively and obscene pamphlets (as well as in learned literature), cartoons and satires. Hogarth depicted her very crudely in the second version of *Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism*, a plate published in 1762, and also in *The Cunicularii, or the Wise Men of Godliman in Consultation*. . . .

The story of Ducklegs may well seem to be a story of success without any notable achievement or personal merit. Mrs. Delany's picture of his buffoonery and the Speaker's picture of his bad manners, obstinacy and irascibility could not have been derived from a charming and intelligent character, nor does anything we know of him, directly or indirectly, place him in a favourable light. But at least we have to allow that he gave the family a noble house, whatever his motives may have been in doing so (and I shall discuss them presently), and adequately maintained, though he did

not advance, the family position in Surrey. Like his father he was much concerned with commercial enterprise and with methods of raising money. One has to remember that men who devote themselves to the concerns of trade, estate, office or speculation, without achieving great eminence in any of these activities, do not strongly impress the minds of their contemporaries or leave behind them any notable account of themselves in the memoirs of their time.

Ducklegs can hardly be described as a court favourite. He was also remote from the intellectual and literary life of his age, escaping thus from wit or satire, not sufficiently conspicuous even for the malice of the scandalous magazines: affluent, he lived in a state of elevated though sterile mediocrity.

No doubt the assumption that he was a loyal and consistent Whig is entirely correct. The fact would have been creditable, had it not been for the obvious advantage of being a Whig, and the very serious disadvantage of being anything else, in the reigns of the first two Georges. Besides, it had been up to now the Onslow tradition, and it ought to have provided, through Ducklegs, the supreme Onslow opportunity. This opportunity was lost.

Finally, one is left in the contemplation of an unsatisfactory and unpleasing character. Is there nothing to soften what may seem to be the harsh and ungenerous portrait of a covetous, proud and rather stupid man? Perhaps it may be found in the opening clauses of his Will: "I desire to be buried very privately at Merrow, and that my body may be carried to the grave by my tenants by daylight, and without state."

CHAPTER VI

The Visitation of God

ON the 28th of August 1723, Thomas, Lord Onslow, had been "out with Gentlemen a hunting a Fox Chace." He was riding home. On the one side of him, also riding, there was a Mr. Flutter; and on the other, a Mr. Fawks. There was also a Mr. Parsons, not far away. It was about half-past nine in the morning when these four gentlemen were making their way down a sunken and sandy lane, not far from Katherine Hill near Guildford.

Approaching them on foot was a man upon whom the hand of God lay heavily. His name was Edward Arnold.

The face of this man was white and wild; he was carrying a musket, and he was carrying it very oddly—the hammer cocked and the muzzle pointing forward.

No one seems to have paid much attention to him except Mr. Flutter. This gentleman, noticing the ghastly paleness and the surly resolution of Mr. Arnold, asked him why he was carrying his gun so improperly, and what were his intentions. At this moment, Flutter was on the left of Onslow, riding level, and Fawks was a little way behind on the right.

White as chalk and with a madman's fanatical stare, Mr. Arnold was now passing on the side of Flutter when he suddenly wheeled, brought his gun to the shoulder, fired a charge of heavy shot at Onslow, and fairly blew him off his horse.

The first concern of Mr. Fawks and Mr. Flutter was to see whether his Lordship were dead or dying, or merely surprised and angry. His actual condition was that of a very seriously wounded man. He had received the charge of the musket, not in the head (which would have killed him), but

just below the neck, in the right shoulder. His friends lifted him carefully onto the bank of the lane.

Onslow believed himself to be a dying man, and he cried out with bitterness and anger—"The villain . . . hath killed me." By this time some other horsemen (including Parsons) had come up and were quickly in pursuit of Arnold.

The maniac Arnold was now in a furious condition. He shouted and raged, he swore that he would reload his musket. But his pursuers drove him against the bank and secured him, though it is to be observed that they left him in possession of the gun. "You villain!" cried the zealous Mr. Parsons, "you have killed my Lord, and you will be hanged for it." "You won't hang me to-day," replied Arnold.

They took him back, still holding the gun, to the place where his Lordship lay by the side of the lane. Upon seeing that Onslow was alive, the frenzy of Arnold was ungovernable. He had been pale, he had been white; he was now "livid." he made as though to club the prostrate Baron with his butt-end.

In the meanwhile Flutter had galloped off to Guildford, and the surgeons were soon on their way to the scene of this extraordinary affair. The wound in the shoulder was deep, lacerated and extremely dangerous. Even so late as on the 7th of November of this year, Daniel Pulteney wrote: "Lord Onslow is far from recovering of his wound and is likely to fall into a languishing condition." To say that a man was near a languishing condition was equal to saying that his death might be anticipated, the surgeons having failed entirely to set him on his feet.

Now, what was behind all this?

I think there was a good deal behind it. Although it is quite clear that Arnold was a lunatic, it seems fairly obvious that he was incited and infuriated by sane and unscrupulous people who had a reason—though perhaps no adequate or justifiable reason—for getting rid of Onslow. The evidence comes out very clearly in the astonishingly detailed account of the trial of Arnold which was printed not long after the event.

In 1679 Evelyn was already making a reference to the

excellence of the reporting and recording of all capital trials. He was not often present at such trials, he said, "we having them commonly so exactly published by those who take them in short-hand." Edward Arnold was tried on what had recently become a capital charge (attempted murder); the proceedings were most admirably "taken in short-hand" and were subsequently published.

Although the shooting occurred on the 28th of August 1723, the trial did not take place until the 20th of March in the following year (1724). For seven months the crazy and wretched man, Edward Arnold, was detained in the House of Correction, where he was at all times subjected to the teasing cruelty, the boorish curiosity, the taunts and insults of the people. Who was not anxious to see "such a Monster"? Who could resist the spectacle of this pale, mouthing, frenetic man, tossing in chains upon a pallet of straw?

Not every visitor was drawn by this hateful curiosity. There was a very worthy Justice, a Mr. Allen, who visited the prison with the object of extracting from Arnold a coherent account of his act and its motives. What he did extract is of great significance to the historian of the Onslows, but will be more fittingly unrolled when we examine the particulars of this very extraordinary trial.

The first circumstance to be noted is the immense concern of King George (it will be remembered that he had visited Onslow's father in 1717), who personally instructed no fewer than four of his Council, four of the most eminent Sergeants-at-Law, to act for the prosecution. He would, he said, "have his own Servants appear in this Prosecution, to see that Right be done." This alone gives the trial a more than provincial importance, and I think it points towards the influences as well as the agents who were the chief instigators of the madman. However this may be, the four Sergeants of the King's Council—Cheshyre, Whitaker, Comyns, and Darnell—appeared at Kingston on the day of the Assizes, which were presided over by Mr. Justice Tracey.

A note on the criminal procedure at this period is necessary if the case is to be properly understood. The crime of Arnold was clearly defined at the trial—"The Fact by him

committed is Felony without Benefit of Clergy." It was a capital offence. In all such cases, the object of the Judge was to conclude the entire hearing and to obtain the verdict of the Jury in a single day; and if the accused were found guilty he was executed a day or two later. From the legal and humane points of view there is much to be said for and against the swiftness of these proceedings. It was hardly possible to obtain a reprieve, and there are harrowing stories of the reprieve arriving only a few minutes after the convicted man had been hanged. Not infrequently the examination of witnesses might be arbitrarily curtailed, or the less important witnesses might be excluded altogether. (But here it is important to remember that all the witnesses were simultaneously *present in the Court.*) On the other hand, it was far better to be executed speedily than to be left for many days in the horrors of the Condemned Hold. Moreover, the restriction of the evidence on both sides to that of the critical witnesses presented the case with a clarity and energy that were immediately comprehensible to the jurymen. In those days, the expert witness as we know him in our own times was not in existence at all; a circumstance which greatly reduced the time taken up in the argumentative examination of cases (and often taken up so foolishly) and also contributed to the general clearness of the picture.

These were the circumstances in which Edward Arnold had to face his trial at the Kingston Assizes in 1724.

Although it was very unusual to allow a man accused of a capital offence to have the benefit of a defending counsel, it will be observed that a person described as "solicitor for the prisoner," after some discussion, does manage to slip in a word or two. It was also unusual to allow the defence of lunacy, but here again—a most interesting point in legal history—this line of defence had to be considered.

And who was Edward Arnold?

He was described as "of a good family." Good families may produce lunatics as well as any other, but I think the phrase must here be taken as meaning a respectable family: one that had not previoulsy got into trouble. No doubt they were a family of small artisans or middling farmers. It was

established that Lord Onslow knew nothing of Arnold and had never, to his knowledge, seen him before the day of the shooting. Nor had Arnold, so far as can be gathered from the evidence, ever had anything to do with Lord Onslow until he met him in the lane. He must, of course, have known him by sight.

Even a lunatic is unlikely to feel that the whole purpose of his life has to be directed towards the killing of one particular man, if he is not assiduously prompted by those who wish him to commit the murder. It may, of course, be dangerous to employ a lunatic to do this work for you; but then he *is* a lunatic, quite incapable of understanding right and wrong, truth and untruth, and who is going to believe a word he says?

All this may sound extremely fantastic: it is much less fantastic than to suppose that Arnold, who had had no dealings whatever with Onslow, should have spontaneously conceived the idea that here was a man whose enormous wickedness was bringing disaster upon the whole country and who, by some diabolical projection of hatred, was bewitching Arnold himself. This is what Arnold actually did believe; and we shall presently see the evidence of promptings and insinuations, and also—what is far more suspicious—the deliberate suppression of names.

The trial began with procedures that have long ago passed out of use. First of all the charge was read in the tortuous absurdity of law-Latin. The Court was informed how the prehonourable Thomas Lord Onslow, Baron Onslow of Onslow "in Com' Salop et de Clandon in Com' Surrey" was confronted by "Edrus Arnold" whose gun was loaded "cum pulvere Bombardino"—with bombard-powder or gun-powder—and with "plumbeis Globulis" or leaden shot; and how Arnold feloniously and of malice aforethought "displosit et exoneravit" disploded and exonerated his gun (did shoot), and wounded the said Thomas Lord Onslow . . . contrary to the peace of our Lord the King.

Now, although Arnold had four of the King's Council against him, he had the advantage of being tried before one of the most humane, as well as one of the most learned, Judges of his time: Mr. Justice Tracey.

Robert Tracey was the eldest son of the second Viscount and Baron Tracey of Rathcoole. He had been a Judge of the King's Bench in Ireland, and was transferred to England as a baron of the Exchequer. In 1716, after the rising, he had tried the Jacobite leaders at Carlisle. At the time of the Arnold case he was in his sixty-ninth year; he retired two years later with a magnificent pension. A contemporary describes him as "a complete gentleman . . . of a clear head and an honest heart," whose judgments were delivered with such "genteel affability" that even those who suffered condemnation were "charmed with his behaviour." His attributes of learning, fairness and humanity were never more fully displayed than they were at this trial.

After reading the charge, the Clerk of Arraigns put the question to the prisoner: "How say'st thou, Edward Arnold? Art thou Guilty of the Felony whereof thou standest indicted, or Not Guilty?"

The prisoner having pleaded Not Guilty, the Clerk then says: "Culprit, How wilt thou be tried?"

To which the prisoner answers: "By God and my Country"; and the Clerk solemnly replies: "God send thee a good Deliverance."

There was then, after the Jury had been sworn, a proclamation by "the Cryer":

"O Yes: if any of you can inform my Lord, the King's Justice, the King's Attorney, or Solicitor General, of any Treason, Murder, Felony, or other Misdemeanor, committed by the Prisoner at the Bar, come forth, and you shall be heard; for the Prisoner at the Bar now stands upon his Deliverance; And all Persons bound by Recognizance to prosecute the Prisoner, come forth and prosecute, or you'll forfeit your Recognizances."

After this came an argument as to whether Arnold was entitled to the benefit of a solicitor for his defence, or whether the plea of insanity could be upheld. This was opposed hotly by Cheshyre, Comyns and Whitaker. The Judge himself supported the argument of the prosecuting counsel, but added, "It is my Duty to give all the Assistance I can; and that I will do."

Mr. Sergeant Cheshyre then said: "We that are Council for the King will do nothing that is hard." Mr. Sergeant Whitaker also declared: "No, I never will, while a Man's life is at Stake. None of us will do any thing that is hard." And the kindly though impartial Judge added: "I don't believe you will."

The whole of the evidence made it clear that Arnold was a lunatic, though a lunatic of the sort that is capable of systematic premeditation and of procedures that are perfectly rational in themselves. According to the prosecution, "he had a steady and resolute Design, and used all proper Means to effect it." He was "a Marksman" who always "aimed at the Head"—of rabbits, in the ordinary course of things. On the day of the shooting he had gone to the shop of a Mr. Smith where he usually bought his powder and shot, having previously borrowed a gun. So far there was nothing out of the ordinary. What was very much out of the ordinary was Arnold's request for shot of the largest size, a request which he had never made before. Most fortunately for his Lordship, the largest size was out of stock, and Arnold had to be content with No. 2, described as "Rabbit Shot." He went off, thus provided, and then, to make sure that the gun was neither foul nor damp, that the flint, the pan and the trigger were acting properly, he fired a charge. After this he made enquiries as to the whereabouts of Lord Onslow.

These actions were consistent with "a steady and resolute design," though obviously the steadiness and resolution were those of a lunatic. Of the shooting itself I have already given an account.

Nothing in this trial is more remarkable than the fierce impropriety of Mr. Sergeant Cheshyre (in spite of his protestations) and the calmly impartial dignity of the Judge.

When Arnold, after a gentle questioning by the Judge, affirmed that "I am sorry for what is done; and I can't think how I came to take that Way," Cheshyre rapped out savagely: "The Devil worked with him, stood at his right Hand, and directed him." And again, when Arnold said

"I have had the Gun go off several times in my Hand; but never, till now, had this Accident," the diabolical Cheshyre quite irrelevantly sneers: "He never before shot a Lord in the Shoulder. He can ask better Questions when he holds up his Head; but if his Guilt makes him hold it down, I can't help it."

On the other hand, Mr. Justice Tracey was quick in straightening or questioning the evidence, and frequently asked the prisoner whether he did not wish to make any comments.

Arnold's wild ravings against Onslow might in themselves have been taken as the fullest imaginable symptoms of madness. Even Cheshyre had to allow, "He did *behave* like a Lunatick."

By day, by night, at all times, Arnold was tormented by "Lord Onslow in his Belly." He could neither sleep nor eat. He was beset in the wickedest way by "the Buggs, the Bollies and the Bolleroyes."

God damn my Lord Onslow! He would shoot him whenever he got a chance: he would shoot him at the Races. He asked his tailor, Mr. White, what sort of a man was Lord Onslow. Doubtless a very good man, said Mr. White cautiously. And what about Lady Onslow? said Arnold. A very good woman, said Mr. White; at least he had never heard to the contrary. Then why don't she cut his throat? roared the crazy and intimidating Mr. Arnold, slabbering at the mouth and striking his bosom with a furious fist.

He would frantically scratch and lacerate his bosom; my Lord Onslow was there, and he would scratch him out.

This grim lunatic, with his clawing hands and lousy hair, was known as Mad Ned. He had a house, but there was no furniture in it. Mouthing, mumbling, with nauseous antics and unmeaning words, he was a butt and amusement to some, a terror to others, a source of scandal and apprehension to his family. He was noted for saying "abominable, wicked and distracted things" and of making wild accusations—as, for example, that Lord Onslow had misbehaved himself with an innkeeper's wife, after the drinking of many bottles of wine. There were times when he went about

hooting like an owl. He was obsessed with a passion for guns, pistols, hog-knives and other deadly weapons. More than once he had "let off his gun in the kitchen." He talked "extreamly inwardly" and would often "catch at his words." The family had been advised to put him in the mad-house. An attempt was made to settle him in Yorkshire, but he came back. They sent him to sea as a marine, on a Court order granted by the first Lord Onslow; but "at the first Opportunity he ran away and came home again, naked and out of Repair."

On the day after the shooting Arnold was visited in the House of Correction by a Mr. Coe, who seems to have been an intelligent and well-disposed person. He found the prisoner in a sad way:

> "He sat quite double, and did not speak a Word. I went the next Day and he was brought into a Room; he seem'd under a Confusion, but not Lunatick. . . . Says he, My Lord Onslow is the Plague, the Occasion of all the Plagues and Troubles in the Country. . . . A hundred People say so, the very Boys in the Street cry out upon My Lord Onslow. . . . When he did answer, it was always rational. He would rail at My Lord Onslow, and say he was the Occasion of all our Plagues and Troubles, and a Man of evil Devices. Says I, Are you not afraid to suffer Death? Says he, it is better to die than to live miserably. . . . I ask'd him if he would drink some White-wine; says he, The White-wine here is too strong for my Stomach; then I call'd for some Sack, and he had it. I ask'd him how he did, and he held down his Head and said, In a bad Condition. I said to his Keeper, I believ'd he would die, he should have some Care of him; the Keeper said, It was common: The Prisoner said, These Irons are very heavy and troublesome, and sat down in a Chair, very ill. He desired me to speak to my Lord, and tell him how he was iron'd. . . . I did speak to my Lord, and afterwards came to see him again. . . . I told him, It is a hard Case, that a Man of such good Family should suffer so, you ought to declare all that you know . . . if you know any body that set you upon this, you ought to declare who it is. . . . But he never did name any body to me, but he told me, I have sign'd a Paper, what is in that Paper is true—."

Arnold wrote two letters to Lord Onslow and also dictated a statement; "He was excited to this by ——, and the Resentment he express'd to my Lord Onslow proceeded

from several Persons perswading him that my Lord Onslow was the Occasion of all his Troubles—."

The evidence of Mr. Allen, a Justice of the Peace, was even more significant.

Allen was respectfully addressed by Sergeant Cheshyre: "I think, Sir, you have the Honour of acting in the Commission of the Peace?"

To which Mr. Allen replied: "I have the Trouble of it, I don't think it any Honour."

His evidence was very startling. He had examined Arnold in the gaol, and Arnold had made his usual crazy allegations concerning Onslow. But there were additional statements of an extremely important nature. According to Arnold himself, "he had long and deliberately intended to murder my Lord Onslow. . . . Ever since last Horse-Race was Twelvemonth; and he had communicated such his Intention to his Friends, *and they had encouraged him to it.*" (The italics are mine.) He then proceeded to name two persons. . . .

At this point in the evidence of Mr. Allen, the solicitor for the prisoner intervened and said these persons were friends of Onslow—the names were not given to the Court —so that the defence (of lunacy) was now strongly reinforced.

An argument followed, as to the disclosure of the names. Having given the names of these persons to Mr. Allen, it seems that Arnold was much distressed by the thought of getting them into trouble. At last Mr. Sergeant Cheshyre, very reasonably, asked Allen the decisive question: "I desire you'll declare upon your Oath, Were these Persons that were so named by the Prisoner remarkable Friends, and in the Interest of my Lord Onslow, or opposed him in his Interest?"

The reply was equally decisive and extremely sensational: "They very remarkably opposed him, *and were ever understood to be bitter Enemies to my Lord Onslow.*" Again the italics are mine.

This reply and the decision to withhold the names leave one in little doubt as to the fact of incitement. What remains to be decided, if possible, is the motive of the inciters; and I

think we may here find a clue in the opening speech of Mr. Sergeant Cheshyre:

> "This noble Lord is known to you all, he hath always appear'd in the Service of his Country, an Assertor of the Liberties thereof, always endeavour'd to support the present Government, in the House of Hanover, and is for the Protestant Religion, against Rebels, and for suppressing Clubs, and Places of Meeting for People's wicked Enterprizes; and if that be a fault, I hope it is a Fault most of you are guilty of, and will be guilty of . . . and if this Man is to be believed, the People had inspired him, brought him to a Pitch of Enthusiasm, I don't know what to call it, that my Lord was an Enemy to his Country, and he thought he should do God and his Country good Service by destroying him. . . . Gentlemen, though he acted like a wicked Man, void of Reason, you will have little Reason to think he acted like a Madman."

Surely the inference is plain enough, especially when it is noted, in addition, that Arnold, in his mad though methodical ravings, declared that the King was at fault as well as Onslow. The King, he said, "put my Lord Onslow upon doing and making these disturbances."

The reference to clubs, meetings and wicked enterprises can have only one meaning: it is a reference to the scattered though persistent activities of the Jacobites in Surrey. There was known to be a secret society of Jacobites in Godalming, and there were many others. There were, for that matter, Jacobites in Parliament (e.g., Shippen); and it was only a few years since the treacherous correspondence of Atterbury had been revealed. One may well suppose, as Cheshyre evidently did suppose, that the "bitter enemies" of Onslow were political enemies who had selected a madman for the accomplishment of their sinister design. Further support is given to this hypothesis by the extremely active interest of the King himself, who had personally organised the prosecution against Arnold.

When the Judge asked Arnold what he had to say, the prisoner replied: "May God forgive me; if it is my fault, I am sorry for it. . . . I ask pardon for all my offences and faults."

The summing-up of Mr. Justice Tracey is masterly,

humane and equitable; one of the finest of all the expositions which, in a criminal case, have ever been heard in our courts of law. After reviewing the evidence, he finished on the critical question: "Whether this Man hath the use of his Reason and Sense." Was he, at the time of the shooting, sane or insane? The end of his great speech is a noble example of close reasoning and of judicial clarity:

> "If he was under the Visitation of God, and could not distinguish between Good and Evil, and did not know what he did, though he committed the greatest Offence, yet he could not be guilty of any Offence against any Law whatsoever; for Guilt arises from the Mind, and the wicked Will and Intention of the Man. If a Man be deprived of his Reason, and consequently of his Intention, he cannot be guilty. . . . Punishment is intended for Example . . . but the Punishment of a Madman, a Person that hath no Design, can have no Example . . . On the other Side, we must be very cautious; it is not every frantick and idle Humour of a Man that will exempt him from Justice and the Punishment of the Law. . . . It must be a Man that is totally depriv'd of his Understanding and Memory . . . therefore I must leave it to your Consideration, whether the Condition this Man was in . . . doth show a Man who knew what he was doing . . . and it is to be observ'd, they admit he was a Lunatick, and not an Ideot. A Man that is an Ideot, that is born so, never recovers, but a Lunatick may, and hath his Intervals. . . . You are to consider what he was at this Day, when he committed this Fact. . . . Gentlemen, I must leave it to you."

The Jury withdrew for a short time. When they came back into the Court, the Clerk of Arraigns put the question to the foreman:

"Edward Arnold, hold up thy Hand. Look upon the Prisoner. How say you? Is Edward Arnold guilty of the Felony whereof he stands indicted, or not guilty?"

The foreman replied "Guilty"; whereupon the Clerk put another question: "What Goods or Chattels, Lands or Tenements?"—and the foreman replied, "None, to our Knowledge."

Sentence of death was passed accordingly—"But at the intercession of the Right Honourable the Lord Onslow, his execution was respited."

Of Arnold, nothing more need be said except that his was

the usual fate of a respited criminal: he died in gaol after a few years' imprisonment.

What conclusions are to be drawn from the trial of Edward Arnold? First, it seems clear that Onslow's enemies, whoever they were, had worked upon the crazy mind of this man in order to make him the instrument of their own criminal purpose. There were two principal instigators, and the careful withholding of their names would imply that they were people of some standing.

To kill a political opponent by means of assassination, especially one who is not in high office, is not a common practice in England. There may have been other, or concurrent, motives. The manners of Onslow were pompous and overbearing, he did not represent an indigenous family, and he was at this time building what appeared to be an unduly pretentious mansion. He was one of the few country gentlemen who were on intimate terms with a King still regarded as a foreign ruler.

It must be allowed that the sum of these facts does not provide a really good case for assassination, nor does it seem to justify so potent a degree of hatred. But there were "bitter enemies," and those enemies had made it their business to work Arnold up to the necessary pitch of lunatic fury. They, indeed, were responsible for the outrage; even if their intentions were not literally murderous.

The evidence also shows, though in a less direct way, a more diffused hostility to Lord Onslow. There was a Mr. Darby who was sent by Onslow expressly to question Arnold in the gaol as to the promptings, the motives of his action, the other persons who were concerned with him in the felony. These enquiries were of no avail, but they show that Onslow (to whom the names of the chief instigators were presumably known) was cognisant of, or suspected, a wider popular dislike. I must not exceed the limits of reasonable or justified speculation, and I must leave it to the reader to decide upon the full implications of this extraordinary episode.

CHAPTER VII

Clandon Park

I HAVE already shown that the date or the dates of the building of the Onslows' Palladian house cannot be determined. It is at least certain that the second Lord Onslow, whether the idea originated with him or not, may be described as the builder.

We know that Leoni was the architect, and we know that the superb fireplaces in the hall (and, I think, others as well) were the work of John Michael Rysbrack, the son of a Flemish painter. It is probable that Leoni and Rysbrack worked in concert, and Rysbrack did not arrive in England until the end of 1720. (It may be noted relevantly that he was the sculptor of the magnificent Baroque monument of the Lord Chancellor, Peter King, who died in 1734, in the church at Ockham, near Clandon Park.)

In Aubrey's *Antiquities of Surrey* (1718-19) there is a reference to the Onslows' house—"a fine Seat . . . under the Downs." We are also told that "The present Lord . . . was married to Mrs. *Knight*, a *West-Indian*, a Lady of a large Fortune." Here, of course, "the present Lord" is Thomas, Dicky Ducklegs, the second Baron; and the "fine Seat" can only refer to the original Elizabethan house. The copy of Aubrey in the Library at Clandon, which I have seen, was the property of the Speaker Arthur Onslow, a man who never missed an opportunity of making a note of any kind in any sort of book. He has made many notes in Aubrey, but none on the passage relating to the house.

Leoni's beautiful and austere building, whether it be a monument of taste or of ostentation, is one of the most enchanting of English houses, though it has not escaped the misfortunes of "improvement." It is based upon an oblong

(*Photograph : A. C. Cooper Ltd.*)

Clandon Park in 1733, showing the Old Stable Block. From the picture in the possession of the Earl of Onslow. (Artist unknown.)

which is here set between the second and third floors. In this feature, perhaps, there was an original weakness, depriving the house of an impressive entrance to the great hall: at the same time it preserved the stately simplicity which is a characteristic of the whole building. Moreover, the entrance was approached by a double flight of balustraded steps, exquisitely designed and of a most harmonious proportion. The hand of "improvement" fell drastically upon this front in 1876, when the fourth Earl (then a youth of twenty-three) added to the centre of the front an enormous and ugly *porte cochère*, at the same time pushing Leoni's balustraded approach outside this horrible protrusion.

The south side or "garden front," one of the narrow ends of the oblong, is architecturally perfect; one of those happy associations of solidity with elegance which give the Anglo-Palladian style its peculiar grace. Tall pilasters emphasise the slight advance or bay of the central portion, and above them is a plain entablature having an architrave and frieze. The long elevation on the eastern side, with its grave but rhythmic economy of decoration, shows in fullest measure the warm and enticing quality of the brickwork: in this particular it may be considered the loveliest aspect of the house.

Each side of the building has its own architectural features, though all are subordinated to a general theme. I am not prepared to say that the ascription of English, French and Italian styles can be maintained without the risk of professional repudiation, nor is there agreement among those who endeavour thus to discriminate.

A beautiful and light severity is preserved along the skyline of the house when viewed from below. The true Palladian architect aims at a straight edge without the domestic importunities of chimney-stacks or the vulgarity of superfluous decoration. This has been admirably achieved at Clandon where a delicate balustrade (few of the original balusters remaining) runs evenly along the top of the brickwork. The illusion is that of a flat roof; but there are no fewer than twenty-three separate low-pitched or "hipped" roofs—three rows of seven each, and two others placed

across them at the ends. Some of these roofs are covered with red tiles which may represent the use of materials from the older building. A very intricate system of guttering carries the rain-water from this curious arrangement of sloped surfaces.

These red roof-tiles naturally raise the question as to whether any of the bricks from the demolished Elizabethan house were used in the present building. Certainly the bricks used in the Palladian house are not entirely uniform, either in colour or texture, nor is the pointing everywhere the same, but I am assured that none of them belong to an earlier period.—Apart from the unhappy porch, the only other indications of modern interference are to be found in the metal bars of some of the windows: these are certainly not original, but may date from about 1820.

Beyond any question the most remarkable interior feature of Clandon Park is the magnificent hall, with its fine stucco ceiling, and the superbly elaborate marble fireplaces by Rysbrack. The space enclosed by this hall is a forty-foot cube, in which it resembles the halls at Moor Park and at Houghton; and here it has imposed very severe restrictions upon the planning of the rest of the house. None the less, it is nobly conceived, with a surface-treatment of unsurpassable dignity in which the highest resources of craftsmanship have been lavishly employed without running to excess or extravagance. The discipline of taste is well observed in the Baroque plasterwork of the ceiling, where a design which might well have got out of hand is beautifully and relevantly controlled by a sense of harmonious relation. The Rysbrack fireplaces are certainly among the finest works of this master —the "best sculptor," said Horace Walpole, "that has appeared in these islands since Le Sueur," and one whose great skill in the carving of marble placed him above his rivals and won the patronage of Queen Caroline. Everything, in fact, has been subordinate, in size and decoration, to the great hall; superb, lofty and ostentatious, gallantly representing the pride of aggrandisement.

But the exterior effect of the Palladian house, at the time of its completion and for eighty years afterwards (that is,

until 1814), was grievously marred by the continued existence of the old stable block which lay athwart, and close to, the north elevation of the building. The sad incongruity and obstruction of this complicated mass is well shown in a picture of Leoni's house, painted not long after it was built, in the possession of Lord Onslow. A procession of grooms and race-horses, out for a morning walk, passes between the new house and the old stables, and a young tree near the balustrade has to be protected from nibbling animals by means of a boarded enclosure.

Lady Onslow "the West Indian" died in 1731, as though the new house, which had exhausted her fortune, had now exhausted her desire to live. Her husband lived only for another nine years, dying in 1740 when he was a little over sixty years of age.

The great house now became the property of the third Baron Onslow, a young man of twenty-seven. Of his education I know only that he was at Eton in 1725.

Richard Onslow, third Baron Onslow, is an equestrian figure. Impressively solid, though gallantly poised, he rides a grey horse in his notable portrait by John Wootton (at Little Clandon); one of the best of Wootton's smaller, more intimate works. At first, perhaps, the heavy oval face of the rider seems to indicate little more than a pompous nullity; an impression which is borne out by a somewhat earlier conventional portrait. But although he was greatly concerned with running and rearing horses he cannot be dismissed as a simple country character. On the contrary, he is one of the strangest, though not one of the most distinguished, of the Onslows.

The natural inheritance of provincial office or representation, a thing taken for granted in those days, returned him as the Member for Guildford in 1734 (when he came of age), and after the death of his father he became automatically Lord Lieutenant of the County and Custos Rotulorum. He was also High Steward of Guildford.

Lords Lieutenants were then persons of much importance and their advice to the Crown on all matters of local administration was usually decisive. At the time of the Jacobite

rising in 1745 Onslow had to raise a regiment of militia. He was nominally in command of this regiment, but it seems to have been little more than a cadre: at any rate, it was never on active service. In 1759 he was again required, under Pitt's unpopular Militia Bill of 1757, to raise a county regiment.

The men of Surrey habitually disliked service in the militia, and even showed their dislike in the form of riots and angry shoutings. At this very time (1757) the Guildford mob chased the Speaker Arthur Onslow (in his coach) all the way back to his house at Ember Court, a distance of about fifteen miles, nor could he get rid of them "but by promising no further steps should be taken till the next session of Parliament" (Horace Walpole). It is thus hardly surprising that Lord Onslow had some trouble in getting his men together, or to learn that he resigned the command of his unwilling regiment to Sir Nicholas Carew. However, he seems to have been concerned in recruiting for some time, and a second regiment was placed under the command of his cousin George (afterwards first Earl of Onslow). His colours were carried ceremonially at the head of the regiment and were painted on the drums.—The Surrey militia were disembodied in 1762 but were revived in 1779 under George Onslow (son of the Speaker), and were for many years one of the curses of the family.

The state of the counties bordering upon London was then such as to cause anxiety to the administrators, and this was especially true of Surrey. Robbery with violence, in spite of the gibbeting of scores of highwaymen, occurred so frequently that it was accepted as a feature of metropolitan and suburban life. On Clapham Common, Bagshot Heath, Kennington Common, Banstead Downs, Ditton Common, Sutton Common, at Peckham Gap and in the green lane at Streatham, on Wandsworth Heath, Putney Heath and along the lonely tracks near Cobham, the gentlemen of the road were always busy.

In any of these places you might find yourself confronted suddenly with "a beatle-brow'd, black-ey'd, stern-look'd, well-set Man,"—so described in the papers after one of his

terrifying escapades. Or you might be mysteriously beset, as "several Gentlemen" were "in the road to Kingston," by a swiftly moving commando, a band of dodging fellows, bewildering in the darknesss, "who appear'd sometimes two, sometimes three, and once four together." In 1736 a gallant though unfortunate gentleman, with two pistols and a blunderbuss, fought a running battle for half an hour against several footpads: although the sounds of this engagement were heard by many, no one came to his assistance and he was robbed of money and watch.

One of these Surrey highwaymen was the son of a clergyman and had seen active service in the army. Others were known only by description. "The man had on a close blue coat, with the cape buttoned up to the chin, and a black crape over the upper part of his face." Another was "dressed in a blue surtout coat, had a pigtail wig on, and a narrow gold-laced hat"; and another was "a middle-aged man, thin visage and long nose, dress'd in a light-coloured duffil surtout, black stockings, and no boots . . . has his nose broke much—." In 1742 Piggott and Roof were hanged on Ripley green for robbery and murder "on the said green." At Guildford, a highwayman sentenced to death at the Assizes obtained a pardon "on condition of transporting himself for seven years."

Lord Onslow's most formidable undertaking against lawbreakers took place in 1769 when he sent out a force to capture or disperse "not less than five hundred gypsies and smugglers" camped in a wood on a hill near Guildford from whence they raided the fields and the farms below them. The force consisted of "a body of constables." That is reasonable enough; but one is astonished to hear that these men had the support of artillery and were accompanied by "fourteen pieces of cannon mounted upon carriages." Unfortunately the account of this expedition (which I have extracted from the Clandon archives) does not say whether the fourteen pieces of cannon were called on to open fire.

The more peaceful, ordinary and enjoyable occupations of Lord Onslow were concerned with horses. He loved racing and hunting. Every year in Whitsun week, from

Tuesday to Friday, there was a great concourse of gentlemen and their nags on Merrow Downs, where the Guildford Races were run, and a jolly day finished up with "a great Cock-Match." All disputes were settled by Lord Onslow or "whom he should appoint."

These races were strenuous, prolonged and exciting, such as would exhaust the most powerful horses, the most frantic and obsessed of riders. His Majesty's Plate was won by the best performer in three four-mile heats: "any horse carrying twelve stone, not more than six years old." On the following days there were races for the Ladies' Plate, the Gentlemen's Contribution Plate and the Town Plate—which was again for the best in three four-mile heats: "Fillies and Mares allowed to carry three pound less than Colts and Horses." Anyone who subscribed not less than one guinea to the plates was allowed to sell liquor on the Downs. And the farmers "entreated the Favour of the Company not to ride or drive over the Corn."

The popularity of Guildford Races gradually declined. This decline was chiefly due to the increasing attractions of Epsom and Ascot, and by 1841 the grand-stand was pulled down and only one race was run,—that for the Queen's Plate (formerly the King's Plate). According to the *Victoria County History* the last meeting on Merrow Downs took place in 1870. William Hillier, the fourth Earl of Onslow (then a boy), wrote in his diary in that year "—saw a lot of roughs going to the races."

A picture at Clandon Park shows the course on the Downs with a flimsy grand-stand and white posts and railings. In the foreground a fox-hunt crosses the scene, with Lord Onslow in a white overcoat scudding along in the group of horsemen.

This brief account of the sporting Baron would be incomplete without a reference to his two famous horses, Victorious and Whynot, celebrated occupants of the stables in the Park. In three years he won eighteen fifty-pound plates with his notable nags; and Whynot (whose likeness is preserved in a coloured engraving at Clandon) ran at Hounslow, Epsom, Chesterfield, Guildford, Maidenhead,

Leicester, Northampton and Aylesbury. This great horse died at a respectable age in 1761.

A more private view of Lord Onslow shows him as a man of strangely complicated and rather forbidding character. In 1741, the year after he succeeded his father, he married the second daughter of Sir Edward Elwell, one of the Members for Guildford. This lady has passed irrecoverably into the shades, without leaving so much as a miniature, a lock of hair, a sribbled album, a patch of embroidery to record her existence. Of her we know nothing at all, apart from what has been preserved in family tradition, or very briefly related in the MS. history of the fifth Earl. According to this tradition Lady Onslow and her husband did not speak to each other and, so far as was possible, did not look at each other. Messages were conveyed by "a humble companion," and a movable screen on the dinner-table kept them, when properly adjusted, mutually invisible.

"Set the damned thing higher, you rascal!" the Baron is alleged to have roared at his footman. "I can still see her face!"

Whether the legend is exactly true or not, it would seem to indicate that the marriage was not an exceptionally happy one. This may have been partly due to Lady Onslow's failure to bear children. And thus the line of the Barons came to an end.

In 1749 Lord Onslow, like his father, and with no discernible reason, was given the degree of an honorary LL.D. by the University of Cambridge. Equally mysteriously he was created a Knight of the Bath in 1752, an event recorded by Horace Walpole: "Prince Edward, the young Prince of Orange, and the Earls of Lincoln, Winchelsea and Cardigan, were declared Knights of the Garter: the Scotch Earl of Dumfries had the Green Riband, and Lord Onslow the Red." A mixed company.

The comparative political uselessness of the third Baron had the effect of giving prominence to George Onslow, the son of the great Speaker, and the more so when it became evident that the barony would pass to George after the death of Richard.

This event was anticipated by George, a most ruthless political schemer, with pleasurable anxiety. Evidence of this anxiety, and perhaps also of the general view concerning the Baron's character, is preserved in the unpublished letters of John Butler—himself an equally ruthless, though ecclesiastical, schemer, who wrote in the most unguarded manner to George Onslow under the (fortunately) mistaken impression that Onslow was a man of honour and that his letters would therefore be destroyed. Instead of these letters being burnt, they were carefully bound in two handsome volumes which are now of the greatest value to the Onslow historian. I shall have much to say of Butler, and much to quote from his letters, in later chapters: it is my purpose now to show what he had to say about the master of Clandon.

Butler, at the time when most of these early letters were written, lived at Farnham: it was not until some years later that he received the high preferments that were procured for him by his patron, George Onslow. Naturally he was himself concerned in the demise of the third Lord Onslow, a demise that would bring rank, and consequently increased influence, to George. In June 1768 he wrote:

> "We dined at Clandon last week, and had a more agreeable day than I expected. His Lordship was full of Conversation and very polite. He looked thin, and appears to have lost all Appetite. I am ashamed to own, that notwithstanding his Courtesy to me, I was flattering myself with hopes of a happier day in the same house not many years hence."

In Butler's impatience at the inconvenient prolongation of the Baron's life, George Onslow certainly participated. In 1771 Butler is even more outspoken, and he refers with callous indecency to "the apparent recovery of one, who does great hurt by living and would benefit the world by dying." In 1773, when Lord Onslow had returned from Bath, impatience and indecency go further still:

> "I am . . . hurt to hear, that a certain Patient has dragged the incumbrance of his life from Bath, where I was in hopes, he would have done us the favor to resign it. He is very teazing and perverse with that useless breath of his."

In the following year (1774) Butler's exasperation breaks out in frequent impious ejaculations: "Lord Onslow is alive. What a strange world we live in!" Then comes another visit to Bath, and renewed hopes:

> "If any good news should come from Bath, you will let me have the happiness of hearing it. My thoughts are often there, but they only take Bath on their way to you."

And still the good news of the Baron's decline, the blessed intelligence of his death, were deferred. He was little more than sixty, but there were hopeful signs of decay: a thinness, a loss of appetite, a dangerous irritability. Surely Providence would have some regard for the advancement and interest of worthier men. In October 1775 Mrs. Butler was despatched on a bad-will mission to Clandon. "I shall be impatient," writes her husband, "for the observations she may bring with her."

"Oh that death had visited a greater man than Sir Francis!" cries Butler in the same year; and then, in 1776, the Baron, who for so long had been so obstinately disobliging, actually dies.

What raptures for parson, what raptures for patron, what noble, natural hopes of advance and aggrandisement! My dear Lord! "How happy I am to address you thus! . . . Every body here is glad of your exaltation—."

Lord Onslow, the third Baron, was sixty-three when he died, thus ending the line of direct baronial succession. His character, whatever it may have been, does not rise to the surface. We are told that he was both wealthy and generous, and also that he was "a patron of the arts." This may seem a little strange, though certainly no stranger than his possession of an honorary doctorate. He bought, according to the fifth Earl, "a magnificent Greek statue," afterwards presented by George to Lord Pembroke. One should remember, perhaps ungenerously, that the owning of "antique" statuary was then extremely fashionable. Possibly he introduced the decorations in the Adam style which are to be observed in several of the rooms at Clandon. His activities were never remarkable. He was described by that elegant

scandalmonger, Hervey, as a "Yes-and-No man," who spoke on one side and voted on the other.

In Barlow's *Complete English Peerage* (1775) there is an extraordinary passage relating to the third Baron Onslow, who was then still alive:

> "This nobleman's good nature and hospitality have had very disagreeable consequences; they induced his heirs to believe that he would by extravagance greatly prejudice his fortune, and he has calmly submitted to such regulations as were imposed upon him; whereby from being the proprietor of a very ample fortune he can now command but a very scanty pittance."

The meaning of this is obscure, and would seem to imply that his cousin George Onslow had induced him to agree to some form of entail or reversion, or to some transference of capital, which would be to his own advantage.

Of the first three Barons Onslow, the builders and embellishers of Clandon Park, one may be inclined to suppose that the second and third obtained an extent of recognition and a profusion of reward that seem unwarranted by their actual performance. This is combined with an apparently tenuous and uncertain contact with contemporary society, in spite of magnificent entertainment, the amiable presence of royalty, and a more than adequate amount of ostentation. One might assume the existence here of something in the nature of an illusion or paradox; but I think it important to remember that the earlier Onslows did not possess those qualities which could have brought them to the notice of intellectually brilliant people and of the better-known letter-writers.

However, they are not to be dismissed lightly as nothing more than county grandees, men of the stables, the chase, and the more lordly direction of provincial affairs. The mere marrying of money, though it went a long way, could not have accounted for their position. Nor would the inheritance of rank, though vastly more important in those days than it is now, have explained the paradox. There must have been something more solidly commendable in these men, something more evident to their contemporaries than it is to us,

something which made the name of Onslow prominent, and for a time pre-eminent, in the county of Surrey.

No doubt there was a fairly intimate relation between the fortunes of the eighteenth-century Onslows and their ready acceptance of the Hanoverian dynasty.

The first three Georges, like the first three Barons Onslow, cannot be described as men of great intellectual powers, to whom the society of scholars and wits could have been acceptable. All of them had a bluntness and a simplicity, with an obstinate belief in their own practical knowledge, a primitive liking for the ordinary pleasures of life, which made them prefer the dignified rusticity of the country gentleman to the subtlety and impudent sarcasm of the professional courtier or the talk of men of taste and erudition.

It seems quite certain that the second Baron, Thomas Onslow, did not feel himself on an equal footing with the older families of the Whig aristocracy; nor could his wife, Elizabeth, however worthy and wealthy, have been received as a friend or familiar by the wives of the ruling noblemen. In such a state of affairs ostentation becomes almost inevitable, and I think the building of Clandon Park was an act of pure truculence, the assertion of a consuming family pride. It was also an act of consolidation. The Onslow influence in Surrey required the crowning prestige of a great house, a house in the modern taste.

CHAPTER VIII

The Great Speaker

FROM 1714 to 1762 the Whig supremacy in Parliament was unbroken. Although disquieting arguments and extremely bitter clashes of opinion took place within the party, and although personal rivalries or hatreds blazed up in the most violent of encounters, the structure of the Whig system as a whole was firm and reliable. In the essential matter of supporting the Hanoverian dynasty and opposing the treasonable Jacobite activities of the Tory party the Whigs were solidly united; not only because of principle, but also because of immediate personal interest. They had the support of the land-owning aristocracy (whom, indeed, they represented in person) as well as of the rising commercial classes, the religious independents, the Broad Churchmen, and those who in later times would have been described as Liberals.

This dominance of a single party, the Whigs in clover, was not in all respects a thing to be admired. Men in power come to regard their power as a personal right; one might almost say, as a personal habit, a condition of identity. It meant the retention of social status, the prestige of great estates and of noble names. As a means of retaining or displaying power, corruption was practised with horrifying candour and accepted as a necessary part of the political system. We cannot say that such practices have been expelled from the countries of civilised men today, but no party in any such country is now prepared to condone those practices which, in the eighteenth century, were not even regarded as offensive, let alone criminal. For this we have to thank, not so much our improved morality as the difficulty of suppressing news.

At this time the most remarkable of the Onslows made

his appearance; not a man of rank or fortune, but one of supremely fine personal endowment.

Arthur Onslow was the elder son of Foote Onslow, the honest and unprosperous Turkey merchant of whom I have already spoken. He was born in the village of Kensington (not Chelsea, as stated in a standard work of reference) in 1691.

In youth he was melancholy, diffident and without ambition; serious in mind and of a heavy deliberate behaviour. He seems to have been responsible for adopting the motto *Festina Lente* (engraved on his book-plates), and it suited him extremely well. (The three Barons used the earlier motto: *Semper Fidelis.*) Grave and reticent in speech, he was not incapable of the warmest affections, the most loyal attachment. In appearance he was dignified without any vain pomposity, handsome without the airs of a fop. His belief in the orthodox religion of the Church was the result of a deep natural conviction, not of mere conformity and usage.

The family was poor. His father died ("in embarrassed circumstances," you will remember) when Arthur was nineteen, and it became necessary for him to think of earning a living and to help in the education of his brother (afterwards Lieutenant-General Onslow). He had been educated at Winchester and matriculated at Wadham, though he took no degree. The only profession for which he appeared to be at all fitted was that of the Law. In this he was encouraged by the kindly intent of his uncle, Richard, the first Baron Onslow, at Clandon, where he spent his holidays. But it soon became apparent that his diffidence, the lack of impulse and enthusiasm in his manner, precluded him from any hope of success; and although he was called to the Bar in 1713 he made no headway.

This failure threw him, as he says, into a state of "great despondency as to the future course of his life." His melancholy and his lack of confidence became dangerously obsessive, although his conduct was "in general virtuous and regular."

Between Arthur and his widowed mother there existed

occasionally a state of tension. He was not her favourite child and they argued, though not importantly, about their private affairs: in his own words, he was "not entirely satisfied with her management of them." She was a woman of "rather too quick a spirit," ready to act without proper deliberation—a form of careless impulse that was especially hateful to Arthur's well-regulated and orderly mind. But Arthur was bitterly grieved when she died in 1715, and his account of her slightly difficult character ends irrelevantly with the statement "and she had been in her younger years extremely handsome." Thus, the good looks of Arthur Onslow (by no means common among the Onslows in general) may have been inherited from this quick though undependable woman.

The Clandon holidays had many advantages for Arthur. Not only did he acquire a well-tempered and salutary knowledge of the world from his uncle, but he became known in the district as a young man of a trustworthy nature and of good sense.

It did not seem likely that he was to acquire any further distinction, but in 1715 his uncle, for a while Chancellor of the Exchequer, offered him a post as private secretary. He was then twenty-four, earnest and honest,—with no other claim to be remarkable. But a footing in administrative circles, once gained, offers many choices of direction or career. In 1716 Arthur left the Treasury for the Post Office. He found that he was gradually overcoming his diffidence and was even growing, in his temperate methodical way, ambitious. Public life was not so difficult after all, and the knowledge acquired in his Clandon holidays, added to the confidence he acquired at the Treasury and the Post Office, gave him a steadily increasing personal momentum.

At last, in 1720, he firmly entered the Onslow procession as one of the Members for Guildford. By this time he had acquired the property of Levyl's Grove (now Levylsdene) in Merrow, within easy reach of Clandon Park, where his cousin, Dicky Ducklegs, was now the master. From this time he began, with resolute and unhurried circumspection,

always taking a wise and wide view of events, to make his way in the world. He had become a Justice of the Peace. Although he still retained his diffidence when speaking in public, he had the great gift of winning the confidence of others and of quietly conveying a true impression of his general worthiness.

This general worthiness, a term which calls for no mitigation, was not incompatible with dealings in the South Sea stock while, at the same time, he lamented "the corruption of mankind" that was evident in those dealings, and was careful not to show himself any more than was necessary in the "place of resort" where speculators of every kind "appeared almost every day to the shame and dishonour of their rank and Characters." He was merely "trying his fortune," and one has to assume that he had found a way, possibly rather casuistical or tortuous, of avoiding the contamination of such a procedure. At any rate he was only moderately successful. Although he held £9000 of the stock, he sold the shares to his cousin at Clandon, receiving a bond in exchange. This, unlike most of Arthur's proceedings, was remarkably ill-considered. When the stock fell in one dismal crash, Arthur timidly compounded with Ducklegs for less than one-third of the total amount; a meanness on the part of Lord Onslow of Clandon that was doubly reprehensible, though not untypical of the manner in which wealthy men commonly treat their poor relations.

But a more important concern than speculation in South Sea stock absorbed Arthur's attention in 1720. In this year he married Anne Bridges, the daughter of John Bridges of Thames Ditton. She was also the niece and co-heiress of Henry Bridges of Ember or Imber Court, a very handsome property in the same parish.

It is not certain when Arthur moved from Levyl's Grove to Ember Court, but this move was one of great importance: it brought him within two miles of Hampton Court and provided him with a fine property at no great distance from London. It also had the advantage of keeping him in touch with the Duke of Newcastle, the Onslows' political friend, at Claremont. But for some time, at any rate, when Parlia-

ment was not in session he withdrew gladly to his "little retirement near Guildford."

Arthur had not yet escaped from the Onslow predicament of being timid and ambitious at the same time. He was a man who would have been ruined by rank and its obligations. As it was, he moved through timely experience, deservedly acquiring the good will and the confidence of his fellows, into a position of neutral eminence which exactly suited him.

As a private member of the House of Commons he was rather watchful than assertive. From 1720 to 1727 he sat in the House during the Parliaments of the Stanhope-Sunderland ministry and the first ministry of Walpole. He did not often speak. In 1722, when it was proposed to plunder the estates of the Roman Catholics, he expressed his abhorrence of "persecuting any body on account of their opinions in religion." He was among those who, in 1725, opposed the annulment of Bolingbroke's attainder. In a finely characteristic utterance he supported the petition of Richard Hampden in the following year "in consideration of his great-grandfather, who made a most noble and courageous stand against arbitrary power . . . and fell the first victim in the glorious cause of liberty."

He appeared to very considerable advantage also when Thomas Parker, first Earl of Macclesfield, was impeached in 1726 on a charge of embezzling vast sums of money which had been paid into the hands of the Masters in Chancery. In a trial which lasted in the House of Lords for thirteen days, Arthur Onslow was one of the "managers" for the Commons. Although Macclesfield (who was then sixty) made an eloquent defence, he was found guilty and was ordered to pay a fine of £30,000 and to be imprisoned in the Tower until the money was handed over. The King struck him off the roll of the Privy Council, though he said that he himself would repay the amount of the fine: a generous intention thwarted by death. The cash deficiencies in Chancery were stated to be about £82,000, and Macclesfield remained in the Tower until money was raised for paying his fine. That Arthur Onslow should have been one

of the "managers" in this affair shows how steadily he was rising in trust and importance.

Onslow described himself as one of "the old Whiggs," and he preserved the independence which properly belongs to such a character. "I kept firm," he says, "to my original Whigg Principles, upon conscience, and never deviated from them to serve any party-cause whatever." He voted with entire freedom, on the side which he considered to be in the right. His mind was liberal and independent, refusing always to accept the restrictions of party discipline. If there is something a little ostentatious, even a little smug, in his profession of these principles, they were certainly those of an unaffected honesty, and they gave him an honourable renown in the House of Commons such as few men possessed in those days of corruption and effrontery.

His reticence in speaking was not due to an excess of modesty, for that was never among his faults; it was due to the fear of not making a good impression, the natural fear of an ambitious mind. His delight when he found that he was able to speak effectively is recorded in his memoirs with naïve saisfaction.

As he sat in the House, Onslow began to feel that his entire future was to be associated with Parliament, its dignity and its well-ordered proceedings. His respect for the House merged and expanded in a form of true and even passionate devotion. The very Chamber had, for him, something between the sanctity of a temple and the exhilarating intimacy of a club-room. To occupy the central position in the House, to wear the splendid robes of the Speaker, to sit in the nobly ornamental Chair, to be the just arbitrator, the servant and yet the master of the whole assembly—that was presently his ambition and ideal.

In June 1727 George I died in Hanover. A general election followed in August, and Arthur Onslow was returned in a double capacity as the Member both for Guildford and the county of Surrey with the highest majority ever recorded. His descendant, the fifth Earl of Onslow, observes that "plenty of money was at Arthur's disposal and he had so much support that he began to have no fear for the result."

It was the common gossip in the county that Arthur Onslow would be elected Speaker when Parliament assembled. We are told that Walpole "spoke openly of it and Lady Lechmere called him 'the intended Speaker'."

Parliament reassembled in January 1728 under the leadership of Walpole. Onslow decided that he would represent the county of Surrey. He was now in his thirty-seventh year, the close friend of Sir Robert Walpole, and a man universally respected, if not universally popular, in the House of Commons. His election to the Chair, without a single dissentient voice, was no surprise to anyone. He was proposed by the Marquess of Hartington, seconded by Sir William Strickland. It was not "plenty of money," it was the fine renown of Onslow which had brought about the happy realisation of all that he had hoped for and raised him to the summit of his personal felicity.

Mr. Speaker Onslow's position and influence, though mainly due to his magnificent integrity, depended in a considerable degree upon his political—and royal—associates: that is, at the beginning of his long Speakership, to Sir Robert Walpole and Queen Caroline.

Walpole, who regarded Onslow with true affection, was at this time (1728) in his fifty-second year. His character has been frequently analysed, though never with entirely convincing results. He was a coarse and rugged man, obstreperously virile, totally unscrupulous in employing for political purposes every imaginable kind of bribery, completely cynical, sometimes dishonourable, alternating between a harsh insistence upon what he believed to be right and a sudden concession to expediency, earnest in promoting the good of the realm, and equally earnest in acting for party advantage or the indulgence of personal spite. His principles were those of a man who detested war and who believed that financial stability was the first concern of politics. These principles were the hard and immovable centre of his political thinking, but his manœuvres, deviations and reversals were those of an experienced and ruthless tactician. It is characteristic of his acuteness and unabashed inconsistency, that he first of all made a fortune out of South Sea stock, by

selling his entire holding at the proper moment, well knowing that the crash would come, and immediately afterwards denounced the horrid immorality of the whole concern. It is equally characteristic that he first opposed and then supported the Schism Act, and abandoned his Excise Bill in order to mollify public opinion.

In his cool and objective assessment of character Walpole was unsurpassed. He was not hampered in this by any softening intrusion of sentiment or the inconvenience of a romantic bias. That is not to say that he was incapable of affection: he loved those with whom he could talk upon terms of cynical agreement, those who concurred in his opinion of the world at large, those who could be relied on to express their own affection, without verbosity, in phrases of mutual understanding. One of the few occasions when he did actually display a spontaneity and warmth of true friendly emotion was recorded by Onslow when he met him at the time of the King's death in 1727.

The opposition to Walpole at this time was led by Pulteney and Bolingbroke, powerfully supported by Chesterfield, the meanest and wittiest of little gossiping fops. He owed his retention in office to that remarkable woman, Caroline of Ansbach, the wife of George II; not only the friend of Walpole but also the friend of Arthur Onslow, and the godmother of his son.

Caroline was no common Queen. She was a philosopher who had corresponded with Leibniz, and who set up in her grotto at Richmond a bust of John Locke. Her views in theology, though unquestionably theological, were broad and accommodating. She offered a bishopric to Berkeley, and protected the Jacobites in Edinburgh. Her fine loyalty to the most obtrusively disloyal of all husbands was not the least of her admirable qualities, and her support of Walpole, whom she saw as the most important of contemporary statesmen, revealed the soundness of her judgment in political affairs. In art and literature her discernment was equally good. She sat on several occasions to the gentlemanly dapper Rysbrack, and even persuaded her grumbling and ugly King to do the same.

(*Photograph : A. C. Cooper Ltd.*)

Foote Onslow (1665-1710). From the picture in the possession of the Earl of Onslow. (Artist unknown.)

Having been sworn a Privy Councillor in July 1728, Arthur Onslow was appointed Chancellor and Keeper of the Great Seal to Queen Caroline.

The accounts of the Queen's household and her instructions to Onslow are preserved among the archives at Clandon. Annual payments were made to the Queen's household at the following rates, which I have selected as representative:

The Queen's Chancellor and Keeper of Our Great Seal,—£54.
Ladies of Our Bed Chamber, each—£500.
Maids of Honour, each—£300.
The Seamstress,—£150.
Twenty-four Watermen, each—£3—3—0.
Clerk of the Stables and Keeper of Carriages,—£150.
Three Equerries, each—£220.
Page of Our Robes,—£30.
Porter to Our Back Stairs,—£20.
Master of Our Barges,—£30.
Seven Coachmen,—£45.
Seven Postillions,—£20—10—0
Nineteen Footmen,—£41—1—0.
Four Chairmen,—£39—17—6.
Apothecary,—£200.
First Physician,—£150.
Bottleman, Linnen Money, a Nag's Livery, etc.,—£55—10—0.

And here are the instructions as to the Seals, under the personal signature of Caroline:

"Our Will and Pleasure is, That you cause to be engraved for Our Service One new Great Seal and One new Privy Seal in Silver, as also One new Signet in Steel, according to the respective Draughts hereunto annexed. . . . Given at Windsor the Twenty Sixth Day of August 1730 in the Fourth year of the Reign of Our Dearest Lord and Husband."

It is difficult to estimate the annual emoluments of Arthur himself. He received five pounds a day while the House was in session; he had an allowance of £100 per session for stationery, and £1000 at the beginning of each new Parliament for "equipment money." He also had a fee for each bill introduced by a private member. Mr. D. H. Jones, who

has allowed me to read and make use of his unpublished thesis on Speaker Onslow, estimates that his average income from private bills did not exceed £200. This may be so, but in all discussions about eighteenth-century finance one has to remember the immense difference between the value of the pound then and the value of the pound in our own lamentable days. One should also remember that there was no Income Tax. According to the fifth Earl of Onslow (MS. History), Speaker Onslow received about £1232 every session in various fees: at a fixed rate for every enacting clause, every private bill, and also for bills relating to provincial administration. He was, moreover, given a service of plate by each Parliament, worth about £1000 (possibly this refers to the "equipment money" already mentioned) and he had a claim—not specified—on the Secret Service Fund. It follows that Arthur Onslow, who, in addition to his emoluments, had married a wife with a very substantial dowry, must be looked upon as a man of comfortable fortune, well able to entertain handsomely and to enjoy the modest pleasures of a cultured and sensible existence.

One of his accounts for official stationery has been preserved, including a "Sattin Bag with gold & Silk Strings & Tassels," a "red Turkey Leather Trunk," the Laws of Scotland and Ireland, a Bible, wafers, bags of sand, and so forth, with a subsidiary list for "His Honour's Chaplains," which does not indicate any undue expenditure.

The Speaker's importance in those undemocratic days, when there was no press gallery and no authorised publication of debates, is hardly calculable. By his control of procedure he affected in a decisive way the course of political history. He could speak freely on all matters concerning the rules of the House, and on any subject whatever when the House was in Committee. What is more, he acted as the sustainer of the privileges of the House against any encroachment, and even against the King.

A man of liberal ideas, encased in the full armour of Parliamentary discipline, with an insoluble gravity of demeanour and a stern refusal to be relaxed or intimidated by wit or dispute, Arthur Onslow was the most effective and

efficient of all Speakers. In his portentous integrity and adherence to prescribed order he, in his lower sphere, may be said to have resembled the great Lord Chancellor, Hardwicke. It is true that he sometimes invested the trivial details of procedure with an importance and a solemnity that were faintly absurd; and I think it is also true that he delighted inordinately in the mere exercise of authority and the archaic pageantry of its external show.

In the House, majestically robed and occupying the central position in his Baroque Chair, he presided over the assembly as a priest would have presided over the holiest of rituals, undeterrably exact and of unshaken stateliness. Clearly the man was made for the Chair, the Chair was made for the man; never in the course of history were a seat and a person more ideally united.

One has to realise how respectably strange and how strangely though valiantly respectable Onslow appeared in the eyes of his contemporaries. In his time, votes were bought, places were sold, and loyalties were cast aside upon the slightest pressure of expediency. Interest and intimidation were the factors which settled election results, and a rotten borough could change hands over a game of cards. No politician was concerned with the mass of the people, except when the people had to be considered as the source of industrial profit or the defenders of national security. Indeed, the politician in the more respectable modern sense did not exist at all. Instead of politicians there were professional statesmen, principally concerned with foreign affairs and the adjustment of internal finance; and very much concerned with personal advantage. Nor had the Chair been previously exempt from this contamination.

The absolute impartiality of Onslow, concerning which there can be no question, was a thing new and of tremendous importance in Parliamentary affairs: it was this which constituted, and rightly, his title to greatness.

He lacked, one has to allow, the flexibility of a humorous mind; such a thing as the invention or the toleration of a joke was not within his capacity. Nor did he possess, in any discernible measure, the graver taste for irony which is often

among the pleasures of the austere. When he prayed, for example, it seemed very natural and very proper that he should place himself, and then his friends and his family, a long way before "the rest of mankind."

Speaker Onslow was a man who delighted in the scribbling of notes, commentaries, memoranda, little snippets and oddments of information at every opportunity. His mental pabula were notes, the very sustenance and joy of his life depended upon these jottings and records.

They range from the immensely important (unpublished) commentaries upon the Journals of the House of Commons which are contained in a vast folio at Clandon Park to hasty remarks written on the margins of his books. A few of these will be quoted in the appropriate context; most of the Parliamentary notes are records of procedure and amendment, or references to modifications in the Standing Orders of the House, but some are of biographical value.

These manuscript relics show that even the smallest matters, as well as the most vital, received the scrupulous attention of the Speaker. No Member was to keep a place in the House during his absence "by Book, Glove, Paper or otherwise, till after Prayers, & then only for himself." But this has to be elaborated: it is resolved "That the Declaration of the House . . . That no Member is to keep any Place &c does not extend to a Member who takes a place by and for himself: If only before Prayers, & leaving a Book, Glove, Paper & other mark of the same, provided such Member be at Prayers." I hope this was sufficiently clear. Of rather more significance, and with an authentic Onslow touch, is the personal declaration that "all Debates in this House should be grave and Orderly, as becomes so great an assembly; and that all interruptions should be punished."

Possibly it may seem that Arthur Onslow was addicted over-much to the record and observation of mere trivialities. This view, I think, is entirely mistaken. He saw in the procedures of the House a compact and irrefragable whole, a canon or testament, a thing to be preserved and upheld in every particular. They constituted a machine, from which the extraction of the very smallest of parts, or the failure to

apply a single drop of oil at the right place at the proper time, would endanger smooth and efficient running. But it was more than this. For Onslow had a legalistic mind, a respect for accumulated wisdom succinctly deposed. He set before himself the ideal of completeness, the absolute security of a code so extended and amplified that it could be applied without hesitation to any emergency at any moment. If he was the priest of the House (as he appeared to be) then the Rules of Procedure were his *biblia sacra*.

Onslow's record as Speaker of the House is extraordinary. He held this position, without a break and without a possible rival, for thirty-three years. He presided over the debates of the Commons during five ministries, and for the greater part of a sixth; and this with no diminution, but rather with an increase, of the trust and affection of the House. No man can dispute the correctness of Dasent's account of him as "the great Arthur Onslow . . . unquestionably one of the most distinguished Speakers the House has ever known."

Until 1752 (when he moved into a large house in Soho Square) Arthur Onslow lived in very modest quarters in Leicester Street, a narrow lane which led into Leicester Fields at the north-west corner. Here he lived while Parliament was in session. When not in London he spent his time at Ember Court and occasionally visited Clandon, though his relations with the second and third Lords Onslow were never cordial. At the same time, the aggrandisement of the family, so richly and rosily displayed by "the noble house at Clandon," was immensely gratifying to Arthur's faintly snobbish proclivities. "You are descended," he proudly observed to his son George, "of a Gentleman's family, equal in its antiquity to most of the best Families in England."

In 1730 the famous picture of the House of Commons, with Onslow in the Chair and Sir Robert Walpole standing by him (with the air of a head boy receiving instruction from his master), was painted by Thornhill and Hogarth. At the time when this picture was painted Hogarth—the slightly unacceptable son-in-law of Thornhill—was about thirty-three, and Thornhill was fifty-four. Most probably the greater part of the picture is painted by Thornhill; indeed, it

was categorically stated by John Lane, an authority on eighteenth-century portrait-painting, that Thornhill painted all the faces. A manuscript note by Speaker Onslow himself states that "Some of the figures were done by Mr. Hogarth." He refers to Thornhill as "His Majesty's painter . . . who drew this picture"; and a scroll in the picture itself bears the inscription "Done by Sir James Thornhill then a Member of the House of Commons, 1730." This would seem to imply that the part played by Hogarth was entirely subsidiary, and in this—with deference to more expert opinions—I concur.

The picture contains two Onslow portraits, for the central figure in the front row of the Members, between Godolphin and Thornhill himself, is Arthur's brother, the General (at this time Colonel Onslow, and the Member for Guildford). Of these three lesser portraits, the Speaker observes that they are "very like." Sidney Godolphin was the Member for Helston, and the "father" of the House; and Thornhill represented Weymouth. The clerk sitting at the table is Edward Staples; and his assistant, decently shaded, and now in danger of melting into the blackness of total oblivion, is Mr. Aiskew.

Arthur's unworthy son, George, was born in 1731. The Speaker had also a daughter, Anne, of whom I know only that she died unmarried in 1751, and that she figures, with her father and mother, in a print showing the notables at Tunbridge Wells in 1748.

Mr. Speaker Onslow was affected, though not dismayed, by the increasing opposition to Walpole and by the withdrawal of the Excise Bill in 1733—the result of political malevolence and of popular tumult, as well as by the manœuvres of what we now describe as "the black market." Effigies of Walpole and of "a fat woman," intended by the City mob to represent Queen Caroline, were burned in public, and the danger of rioting on a formidable scale could not be ruled out. The Queen was no truckler, and would have had these riots put down by force; but Walpole, wisely or unwisely, decided upon the withdrawal of the bill. This reverse, though at first seeming to be a triumph for the opposition, did not impair the prestige of Walpole: on the

contrary, it strengthened the support of the royal household, and especially of the King.

In all probability Onslow was more concerned in the same year (1733) by the proposal to build a new House of Commons on the fashionable lines of Burlingtonian architecture. Plans were prepared by Burlington himself in consultation with Onslow; but all that came of this was a report to the Office of Works by the Speaker, relating merely to "necessary repairs to the passage leading from St. Stephen's Chapel to the Painted Chamber, the roof and gable end of the Court of Requests, the roof of the Speaker's private chambers, and the chambers belonging to the Clerk of the House."

Thus the name of Onslow, through a natural honesty of heart, a stately demeanour, and a warm devotion to the English Parliament, acquired indestructible fame. But Onslow's position cannot be understood without some reference to the strange political events of which he was the umpire and observer. These events constituted, perhaps, the most curious phase of internal dissention ever seen within an English political party.

CHAPTER IX

Heresy and Schism

APART from the close friendship between Arthur and Sir Robert Walpole, it has to be allowed that the political friends of the Onslows in the eighteenth century, however useful and however powerful they may have been, were not usually men of the highest intellectual order. For example, there were the two Temples (uncle and nephew) and the two Pelhams (the Duke of Newcastle and his brother Henry).

Although the activities of the Pelhams and of the younger Temple belong more properly to a later phase than the one we are now considering, it will be convenient to speak of them here. They represent the less dependable and less effective components of the Whig party: those who had time to listen to smaller men and to carry on the smaller kinds of political intrigue.

The elder Temple, Richard, first Viscount Cobham, was a soldier whose more rugged and ribald aspects were mitigated by a liking for poets, gardens and lordly architecture. He was the friend of Pope and of Congreve, and, like Arthur Onslow (whom he met there), a member of the Kit-Cat Club. Described as "a true Whig," he showed how easy it was for a true Whig to become something else without being a Tory. His fortunes resembled those of the Onslows in bringing him rapidly into favour when George I became King of England. In the first year of the new reign he was created Baron Cobham of Cobham in Kent, and in 1718 he became Viscount Cobham. He was appointed Colonel of the "King's Own Horse" in 1721, and in the following year was Comptroller of the Accounts in the Army, and Governor of Jersey for life. Then came a clash with Robert Walpole; he opposed the Excise Bill and expressed a fretful disagreement in other matters. As a result, he was dismissed from his

regiment and openly joined the Prince of Wales's party in opposition to the King and Walpole.

Although he was now (in 1733) sixty-four, he was a principal instrument in forming the Whig opposition known as "the Boys"; an opposition which included William Pitt. Becoming, somewhat oddly, a General, and then a Field Marshal, he continued to oppose Walpole, and shortly before his death he joined the brothers Pelham.

Richard, Earl Temple, who became the intimate friend of Arthur Onslow's son, George, was the eldest son of Richard Grenville by his wife, Hester Temple, the second daughter of Sir Richard Temple, and sister and co-heiress of Richard, Viscount Cobham of Stowe (the Field Marshal). His mother succeeded as Viscountess Cobham on the death of her brother in 1749, and her son Richard in 1752 entered the House of Lords as Earl Temple, owning the vast estates of Stowe and Wotton in Buckinghamshire.

Temple was pert, vindictive, arrogant, and a dirty schemer of almost inconceivable stupidity. He ran about whispering petty scandals and inciting scurrilous and libellous pamphleteers. There is nothing here to his credit, except that he was supposed to have encouraged the author of "Junius." He never attained high office and was mortally injured, to the great benefit and exultation of all honest men, when he was thrown out of his pony-carriage at Stowe. According to the King, he had always been "so disagreeable a fellow, there was no bearing him" and "in the business of his office"—as First Lord of the Admiralty—"he was totally ignorant."

And what is to be said of Newcastle, the intimate friend both of Arthur Onslow and his trimming son, George?

Newcastle himself was a trimmer who had a place in almost every administration from 1724 to 1766. It can hardly be said that he changed his opinions, because it is doubtful whether he ever had any. He is the very type and example of a man who owed everything to money, rank and influence; and nothing whatever to brains. "In private life," says Lecky, "the glaring weakness of his character would

have been comparatively unnoticed. . . . He was the most peevish, restless and jealous of men . . . so hurried and undignified in manner, so timid in danger, and so shuffling in difficulty, that he became the laughing-stock of all about him." This opinion is largely based upon the assessment of Horace Walpole, who said that he had "a borrowed importance, a real insignificance" which "gave him the perpetual air of a solicitor, though he was perpetually solicited; for he never conferred a favour till it was wrested from him. . . . He always caressed his enemies, to list them against his friends; there was no service he would not do for either, till either was above being served by him. . . . He aimed at everything; endeavoured nothing . . . a man of infinite intrigue, without security or policy, and a Minister despised and hated by his master, by all parties and all Ministers, without being turned out by any." Incessantly twittering "Est-il permis? est-il permis?" he was nothing more than a foolish figure in politics until, when the power of Walpole began to decline, he attached himself tentatively—"est-il permis?"—to the opposition. He supported Carteret, one of Walpole's most intelligent enemies, in 1737, thus bringing upon himself the scornful and virulent denunciation of Queen Caroline; whose language, in such a case, could bear comparison with that of Walpole himself. This was one of the last of her strokes in defence of the great Minister. She died later in the year.

Such, I fear, were the more notable of the Onslow supporters (always excepting Walpole and the Queen) in the eighteenth century. From the contamination of such men as these—indeed, from all political and social contamination—the great Speaker was entirely immune: it was otherwise, and lamentably otherwise, in the case of his son.

The opposition of such men as Newcastle and the elder Temple would have caused little disturbance, and only moderate annoyance, to Walpole. In the sullen hatred of Pulteney, the brilliant assaults of Carteret, and the cold oozing venom of Chesterfield, he had to face an intelligent hostility directed at the weakest point in his defence.

These men were of a very different stamp from the

Pelhams and the Temples.—Pulteney (afterwards Earl of Bath) was by some years the youngest of the three. He owed his influence rather to place than to ability; his powers were those of an obstinate, not a resourceful, man. Both Carteret and Chesterfield belonged to the older party in the opposition, founded and inspired by Bolingbroke and known as "the Patriots," though Chesterfield had not formally joined this group until 1733. The younger dissentient Whigs, "the Boys," were not openly in opposition until their alliance with Frederick, Prince of Wales, that lamentable Fred who was better dead, in 1736.

Carteret was a man of laughing, impetuous temper who had for many years disliked the predominance of Walpole. He took his seat (as Lord Carteret) in the House of Lords when he came of age in 1711, and at once declared himself in favour of the Protestant Succession. His knowledge of German, as well as his Whig principles, made him the favourite Minister of George I, with whom he frequently travelled in Hanover. This increased the personal enmity between himself and Walpole, while his great interest in German affairs made him unpopular with his countrymen as a whole.

But Carteret is not to be judged as a mere politician. He was a gifted and exceedingly versatile character: drunken, learned, sensual, of robust independence and invincible hilarity. In a class of men not highly distinguished for intellectual achievement at any time, he was almost alone in being able to make apposite quotations from classical Greek, and his friendship with Dean Swift is evidence of his ability as a wit and a talker.

Of Chesterfield, that sleek and insinuating dandy, little need be said here. His portrait by Allan Ramsay and his own writings amply reveal his character. He is described as a Whig, but in politics, as in all other matters, his only principle was to have no principles at all. According to Hervey, he was "a dishonest, irresolute, impudent creature, capable only of being a disagreeable enemy," while George II described him, very wittily and accurately, as "a little tea-table scoundrel, that tells little womanish lies . . . and tries

to make women lose their reputations . . . as if any body could believe a woman could like a dwarf-baboon."

From 1733 he was the most bitter of Walpole's enemies, and more than any other man was directly instrumental in bringing about his downfall; for Chesterfield possessed the most formidable of a scoundrel's weapons, a keen and lacerating wit, unrestrained by any considerations of decency. Although he was associated with Carteret in the van of the opposition to Walpole, he was foremost among those who attacked the successors of Walpole, including Carteret himself—in whose forced resignation he played a leading part. His official activities came to an end in 1748 after a quarrel with Newcastle.

In this confusion and uncertainty of political strife and of personal hatreds the position of Arthur Onslow, had it not been for his insistence upon a cool neutrality, might well have been difficult. He owed much to the friendship and influence of Walpole, and one does not wish to believe that his neutrality could have sterilised his affection and regard for the Minister. This, I believe, was never the case, for Speaker Onslow always retained the respect of the House, and although he was accused of pride and ridiculous pomposity, he was never accused of being either a bigot or a place-hunter or a man disloyal to any friend.

Onslow was undoubtedly at his greatest in those years of bewildering cross-currents and under-currents, those rapidly changing scenes of complicated and unpredictable intrigue, between the failure of the Excise Bill in 1733 and the fall of Walpole in 1742. It was now, when the coherence of Government was threatened with disruption, that his impartial watchfulness and his complete assurance in matters of procedure gave the House a feeling of central stability and of wise control. He, and he alone, was able to maintain the dignity and the order of Parliament at a time when these things might have been seriously impaired. In this respect, as a stabilising and controlling authority, the influence of Arthur Onslow upon the course of English Parliamentary history is one of the utmost importance.

He was a happy man: one whose temperament, capacities

and ambition were most harmoniously adjusted. He had aspired honourably to a most honourable position, which he occupied with a just and inoffensive pride, and in which he acquitted himself so admirably that even his critics (and they were not numerous) could charge him with nothing more than a few peculiarities of manner.

Yet there was one feature of the English political system which he greatly deplored—the unrestrained and open practice of bribery and the ensuing corruption both of the electorate and the elected. In 1740 he wrote to Sir More Molineux: "God knows there is so much of it [corruption] about everywhere that I dread the consequences of it with regard to the religion and morals of the nation, and to tell you the truth I am quite sick of the world." But this lament, the natural cry of a scrupulous and religious man, did not represent the customary mood or seriously impinge upon the serene and thankful temper of Onslow. The absolutely complete fulfilment of his ambition gave him the sense of an integrated and eminently useful life. It was no shallow pride, but this true realisation of completeness and usefulness which contributed so much to his external influence and his inward peace.

Onslow's position and importance have thus to be considered in relation to the strange difficulties of politics, and the conflict, not only of policies but of persons.

The difference between parties could often be described as a difference between families, or even as a difference between men who disliked each other. Public opinion, though it might occasionally intimidate or deter, was without the means of exerting a steady influence upon the administration; and although the influence of the military or mercantile classes could indeed be felt, that of the people as a whole did not exist at all in any effective form. The intrigues of the Court and the impact of internal discord between members of the royal family were factors of the highest importance; and although monarchs were nominally constitutional, their personal predilections were frequently decisive—particularly in the appointment of ministers.

I have already observed that the privilege of the House,

which forbade the reporting of debates in the public press, became a political issue of great significance; for the public were thus denied all authentic knowledge of what their representatives were actually saying or doing. There were, it is true, thinly disguised and usually inaccurate accounts, depending upon memory alone, of Parliamentary proceedings, reported under the transparent fiction of "The Senate of Lilliput" or some other device; but these were properly regarded as tendentious, incorrect or misleading.

Speaker Onslow was very much concerned with this particular question, and his attitude, though it certainly represented the sense and opinion of the House, was that of a reactionary.

In April 1738 he himself brought this matter before the House; a debate followed, and a full report was preserved. It is interesting to notice that the only Member who took a broad and enlightened view of the subject was not a Whig, but a conspicuous and able Tory—Sir William Wyndham. He allowed that the so-called reports which were printed publicly were inaccurate, but contended that, when accuracy was assured, "no gentleman . . . ought to be ashamed that the world should know every word he spoke in the House." This the public had a right to know, and he would not oppose the publication of genuine reports.

Onslow took an exactly opposite view: he could not bear the notion of what seemed to him almost an invasion of sanctity, an indecent exposure, an attack upon the very foundations of Parliamentary prestige. The objection was put with particular force and ingenuous candour by Winnington: "You will have every word that is spoken here misrepresented by fellows who thrust themselves into our gallery . . . we shall be looked upon as the most contemptible assembly on the face of the earth." This damaging prediction, however well founded, was expressed in one form or another by everyone who took part in the debate. And even accurate reports, verbatim reports, would undermine all public respect for the administration: they would show the British people how remarkably silly and ill-tempered their statesmen could be. The dignity of the House, that hallowed

illusion, would be lost in a tumult of ridicule and abuse. Even the imperfect reports that were leaking out already were to be repressed with the utmost rigour.

For once, Pulteney and Walpole found themselves in perfect agreement. There was to be no compromise with Demos. The common man was not to know that Members of Parliament were very like ordinary people; only, perhaps, on occasion, pettier, more stupid. It was absolutely necessary, said Pulteney, to stop the detestable practice of publishing garbled versions of debates, and to forbid the publication of debates in any form whatsoever. Walpole said that he had read so-called reports in which he was represented as saying "the very reverse of what he meant."

Mr. Speaker Onslow had the satisfaction of recording the unanimous resolve that the public printing of debates was "a notorious breach of the privileges of the House, and that all offenders should be prosecuted with the utmost severity." The battle between the House and the Press continued for many years before the final victory was won by the reporters.

Arthur Onslow was always as much concerned with his personal dignity as he was with upholding or defending the dignity of the House; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that he looked upon himself as the centre and embodiment of Parliamentary prestige, a person sanctified and inspired by the indwelling spirit of that great institution as a priest is inspired by, and actually represents, his particular deity. In his unpublished manuscript notes at Clandon there is an account of a scene in the House of Lords which admirably displays his attitude in such matters:

> "On March 18th 1739 Both Houses went with a joynt Address to the King, and I as Speaker (according to Custom) went even (on the left hand) with the Lord Chancellor. Upon our entering the room where the King was sat . . . Sir Charly [*sic*] Dalton, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, attempted to put himself between the Chancellor & me, saying He must be there, for it was his place: I thrusting him away with some indignation, the Duke of Grafton, Lord Chamberlain, who was on the right of the Chancellor conducting us up to the King, put his White Staff upon the Black Rod

for him to retire, wch he did to my left hand. Upon our withdrawing from the King He slightly endeavoured, as I thought, to interpose himself again . . . but I would not suffer it."

Thus the mere impression of a slight endeavour was enough to ruffle Onslow; and this little scene—by no means little in the opinion of the Speaker—shows how jealously he guarded and asserted the smallest particulars of ritual. White Staff, Black Rod, the dressing of the line, right hand, left hand, the exactly proper position of each person in the approach to royalty, these were things of the most solemn consequence; and on such things depended, not only the defined and unbroken dignity of the House, but also the dignity of one who could almost be described as its President.

The appointments of Onslow included in 1737 those of Recorder of Guildford and High Steward of Kingston. In 1734 he had become Treasurer of the Navy, a post of considerable and remunerative importance; but this he resigned in 1742, sooner than give countenance to the base assertion that he held the post only for personal interest and advantage, and not because of any special fitness. This gesture was doubtless very noble, but his emoluments from an eight years' tenure of the office were not insignificant.

The Speaker's brother, Lieutenant-General Richard Onslow, is a man concerning whom there is surprisingly little information: the *Dictionary of National Biography* ignores him altogether, and contemporary references are negligible.

Arthur Onslow, when his mother died in 1715 (it will be remembered that his father, Foote Onslow, had died five years previously), was very much and very properly concerned with finding a place in the world for his younger brother; the date of whose birth is unrecorded. Trade, he thought, was "below his station": not an observation which came particularly well from the son of a Turkey merchant. He saw in Richard the qualities of courage and resolution, and describes him as "of a large and fine make in his person and of a very handsome and manly countenance." He therefore chose the army, and bought for his brother a commission

in a marching regiment: what we should now describe as infantry of the line.

The portrait of Richard in the House of Commons picture bears out his brother's opinion as to his looks, and there is another portrait at Clandon Park, painted in the last year of Richard's life (1760), showing him wearing a cuirass and a blue uniform and holding a baton in his hand, which is also that of a handsome confident man with a firm and resolute presence.

In the unpublished family history written by the fifth Earl there is an account of an unseemly brawl—it cannot be called a duel—between Richard Onslow and James Edward Oglethorpe in Haslemere.

This affair shows in a very disagreeable way the enmity which existed between the Onslows and the Oglethorpes: it will be recalled that a fight of a more decorous nature took place between Sir Richard Onslow (the "second Speaker") and Lewis Oglethorpe in 1702.

The name of James Edward Oglethorpe is well known to readers of Boswell. He was a colonist, a soldier and a politician, and a philanthropist of the highest order, and for many years the friend of Johnson, whom he survived. From the age of fourteen he had held a commission in the army, and in 1743 he was promoted to Brigadier-General. The Oglethorpes were a Jacobite family, and James Edward himself had supported the treason of Atterbury. In 1745 he had to face a court-martial on the charge of having shown a most unmilitary slowness in his pursuit of the retreating Scotsmen. Thus, for many reasons, both social and political, the Onslows had no liking for the Oglethorpes. The brawl took place in 1722 when Oglethorpe, at the age of twenty-six, was the Member for Haslemere. General Onslow left behind him a description of this encounter (Clandon MSS.):

"Mr. Oglethorpe and Mr. Burrel meeting Mr. Sharp and myself in the Market Place at Haslemere, Mr. Burrel complained of Mr. Sharp's going about the town and offering to discharge his bills, which he said was an Insult he could not suffer, upon which Mr. Oglethorpe stepp'd up to Mr. Sharp and said 'I have forewarned you of these practices,' and immediately struck him with his Cane,

and then drew his Sword, as also did Mr. Burrel; upon which I went between the Oglethorpes [*sic*] and Mr. Sharp and said to Mr. Oglethorpe, 'You last night promised we should have no Disputes, which you now begin by striking Mr. Sharp.'

"He answered me 'Sir, if you speak to me, it must be at the point of the Sword.'

"I recovering myself beat down Mr. Oglethorpe's Sword and secured it with my left hand, closed with him and told him his life was within my power: He then bid me do my worst.

"I said, 'I scorn to take advantage.'

"He then endeavoured to take his Sword out of my Hand; and wounded me; which he perceiving said 'You are wounded in the Hand,' and upon my opening it he took his Sword away."

Five years after this affair Richard had attained the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and was one of the Members for Guildford: he continued to represent the borough until his death. In 1726 he married Rose Bridges, the sister of his brother's wife; she died in the following year (1727), and in 1730 he married Pooley Walton the niece of Vice-Admiral Sir George Walton. As both of his wives were heiresses it is safe to assume that General Onslow was a man of wealth. After service as Colonel in the 39th and 8th Regiments of Foot (the Dorsetshire Regiment and the King's Liverpool Regiment) he became in 1741 Adjutant-General to the Forces. He was present at the battle of Dettingen, but although he "distinguished himself" (as all generals do in every battle) I can give no account of his personal actions. He remained with the army in Germany until, in 1745, he resigned the command of the King's Regiment for that of the First Troop of the Grenadier Guards.

This appears to have been the end of his active service. In 1752 he was the Governor of Fort William in Scotland, and was promoted to Lieutenant-General soon afterwards. It was a long way from Fort William to Guildford, but he sometimes came south in order to give a little attention to his Parliamentary concerns. He had a town house in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, and another house at East Acton. There is no record, so far as I know, of anything that he said or did in the House of Commons. His politics were con-

sistently those of a Whig, and he died before his party was removed from power.

His death would seem to have been that of a well-fed man of a choleric disposition, for it occurred in the form of apoplexy when, as Governor of Plymouth Dock, he sat on the court-martial that was trying Lord Charles Hay.

This fiery but efficient man left behind him, by his second wife, Pooley, two sons very different in constitution and record, both of whom will appear in later pages of this history: George ("Little Cocking George"), an irascible, clownish military statesman; and one of the most worthy and distinguished of all the Onslows, Sir Richard the Admiral.

While Arthur Onslow had reason to congratulate himself that all was well in the family, his brother handsomely placed in the Service and comfortably seated in the House, things were going badly for his friend Walpole and the Walpole Whigs, as we have already seen. For these lamentable divisions Walpole himself was largely responsible. He had one of the customary weaknesses of a great man, particularly of a great man who is growing old: intolerance of anyone who might threaten the supremacy of his own position or diminish, whether by ability or luck, his own popularity. He had therefore expelled from office many of the best men of his own party, replacing them by statesmen of a subservient and inferior type. Advancing age made him jealous of those who might be his rivals, and his position was gravely shaken in 1737 by the death of his friend and most able supporter, Queen Caroline.

The last thoughts of this gallant woman as she lay dying, in great pain of body and anxiety of mind, were largely concerned with Walpole and the fate of the country. They were less concerned with her blubbering and ludicrous husband (already thinking of new mistresses) and not at all concerned with her puppy of a son.

Queen Caroline, shortly before she died, spoke alone with Walpole for about a quarter of an hour. What she said was very properly concealed by Walpole, but the fact of such an interview taking place at such a time is clear evidence of the close association, both in policy and in affectionate regard,

between these two strong characters. They had concerted much that was of high importance in the government of England, and their friendship had largely neutralised the malign and insidious plotting of Leicester House, where the Prince of Wales encouraged "the Patriots" to oppose the policies of Walpole and the King. (It will be remembered that "Ducklegs" Onslow, the second Baron, had entertained the wretched Fred at Clandon.)

But other events, besides the death of the Queen, were beginning to tell against Walpole.

Captain Jenkins of the *Rebecca* produced in 1738 a severed human ear (or what looked like one, or a bit of one) at the Bar of the House of Commons. It was alleged to have been his own ear, villainously hacked off by the sword of a Spanish coastguard lieutenant in 1731. He had preserved this ear for a considerable time, and he now displayed it, with a passionate account of the whole episode, and a very nasty one it was, at a time when the House and the people were clamouring for a war with Spain. So Captain Jenkins's ear—a brown, crinkled, unseemly scrap of a thing, never very critically examined, possibly not human—was the silly trifle that started a war, greatly to the joy of "the Boys" and "the Patriots," and the distress of Walpole, no longer strong enough to resist the clamours of the mob and the intrigues of his personal enemies.

Another reason, and one seldom adequately stressed by the historian, was the desire of the nation as a whole for a change in leadership, the ordinary political rhythm of a mob's mind when it is tired of peace and wants the excitement of bloodshed. In 1739, when the war with Spain began, Walpole had been in power for eighteen years. He was sixty-three; an age when statesmen, however able, are scarcely in their prime. Moreover, he had clung to power with the deplorable tenacity of an ageing dictator, almost of a tyrant: a sad example (and not the only one) of what may happen when Parliaments tolerate a gerontocracy.

Speaker Onslow, who understood the weakness as well as the greatness of his friend Walpole, has admitted that the great Minister "went very unwillingly out of his offices and

power," and represents him as devising "a popular act to save himself"—a spectacle of which modern history provides many examples. This act was to be "a message from the King to the House of Commons declaring his consent to having any of his family after his own death to be made by Act of Parliament incapable of inheriting and enjoying the Crown and possessing the Electoral dominions at the same time." This proposal he put before Onslow, who declared rapturously, almost fulsomely, "Sir, it will be as a message from heaven." Walpole replied that it should be done, "but," says Onslow, "it was not done, and I have good reason to believe it would have been opposed and rejected at this time, because it came from him, and by the means of those who had always been most clamorous for it" (Coxe's *Walpole*, II, 571).

This anecdote reflects in a strange way upon the characters both of Walpole and of Onslow. It shows Walpole's truckling desire to retain power, even at the cost of a measure designed for no other purpose; and it also shows the clarity and the shrewdness, if not the hardness, of Onslow's judgment.

On more than one occasion the Speaker had to reprimand "old" Horace Walpole, the brother of Sir Robert. He has left a note of one of these occasions in his MS. commentaries. It occurred in the year of Walpole's resignation, 1742 (Clandon MSS.):

> "Mr. Horatio Walpole senr and Mr. Will Chetwynd quarell'd in the House, went out and fought, but were parted and words of threat pass'd between 'em to renew the quarrel. The House inform'd of a quarrel betwixt 'em & they being both come into the House, the usual assurances given not to prosecute the matter any further."

About the same time (1740-42) he made one of his punctilious notes upon "Receiving great men and strangers in the House:

> "Note, the Judges (or Lord Mayor of London) who had chairs set for 'em, did not however sit down in the chairs nor were ever cover'd [i.e., did not put their hats on]." When a Lord comes in,

the Speaker says "My Lord, your Lordship will be pleased to repose yourself in that Chair." Then "the Lord sits down in it and puts on his Hat, & after some time rises from the Chair, pulls off his Hat, & going to the back of the Chair, leaning thereon, speaks uncover'd to the House."

Thus, while Ministers went and were replaced by other Ministers, the Speaker remained in his presidential Chair, watching over, elaborating and enforcing the thousand and one rules, orders, procedures, customs and usages which preserved the decency and the dignity of the House and conferred upon the Speaker himself the full effulgence, the perennial and impersonal glory of unassailable dominance.

There is a noble engraving by John Pine (one of Arthur's friends), showing the House of Commons "in the Session $174^1/_2$ [*sic*]" with Onslow in the Chair, formal and ornate. In front are the Onslow arms and the motto *Festina Lente*, and a stately dedication—"This Plate is most humbly dedicated by his Honour's most obliged and most obedient humble Servant John Pine Bluemantle." Pine (1690-1756) was a notable though sometimes humdrum engraver who was the friend of Hogarth and appears in "Calais Gates" as the fat priest in the middle of the picture. He engraved, among other well-known pieces, Rocque's Map of London, and was Bluemantle Pursuivant-at-Arms at the College of Heralds. This handsome print is perhaps the best pictorial record that we have of Arthur Onslow in the fullness of his glory and in the very place upon which the glory shone and from which it was derived.

Here he was to watch the melancholy stages of Walpole's decline. Already, in February 1741, Carteret in the House of Lords, magnificently eloquent, had moved a resolution that the King should expel Walpole from "his Presence and Counsels for ever." The same motion, moved by Sandys in the House of Commons, was defeated after a masterly defence by Walpole himself. But Walpole was now a broken man and in the following October he was "extremely ill."

Yet even illness could not defeat the pride, the pugnacity and obstinate will of this great though sometimes undignified Minister. He could still fight. On the 21st of January

the end was near. Pulteney called for a Committee to enquire into the conduct of the war. His motion was defeated by the narrow margin of 253 to 250, and shortly afterwards the Government fell in the vote on the Chippenham election; a disaster equal to a vote of no confidence. Walpole resigned.

Arthur Onslow was now to preside over his second Parliament, and he was elected unanimously to the Chair in the short-lived Ministry of Carteret and Wilmington.

CHAPTER X

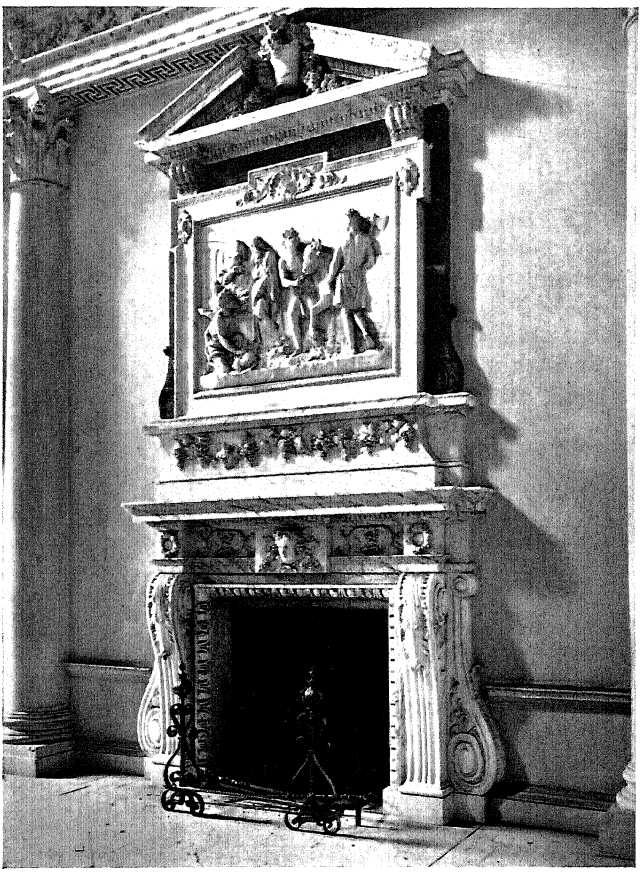
Twenty Years

DURING the twenty years between 1741 and 1761 the Onslow family group is one of strange diversity. This is in fact the period of maximum Onslow concentration, when some half-dozen of the more conspicuous members of the family appeared simultaneously upon the stage.

At Clandon the third Lord Onslow was proudly strolling round his estate, or scampering over the downs on one of his famous nags, or dodging his wife in the Palladian rooms of their splendid mansion. With equal pride and solemnity he carried out the duties, the sonorous and rumbling duties of a Custos Rotulorum, and tried to learn something about the training of a reluctant hobbledehoy militia.

The great Speaker, though always maintaining his prestige at its fullest height, was gradually approaching ill-health, old age and retirement.

At the very beginning of this notable Onslow phase (in 1741), when the results of the elections clearly indicated the steady decline of Walpole's power, the challenge to the Speaker's position, meanly conceived as a blow aimed at Walpole himself, was unacceptable even to the bitterest opponents of the Minister. Chesterfield himself, in a letter to Bubb Dodington, spoke well of Onslow, though he gave him the credit for nothing more than "a certain decency of behaviour." And when the House proceeded to the election of the Speaker, men of all parties joined in the cry of "Onslow! Onslow!" Nor could anything have exceeded the calm propriety of Onslow's thanks to the House. "Since these Gentlemen have elected me to this Eminence," he said, "I have only now to return them my humblest thanks for this particular instance of their favour to me, the sense of which I hope I shall always retain—."



(*Photograph : Central Press Photos Ltd.*)

The " Bacchus " Fireplace by Rysbrack at Clandon Park.

In the middle of this period, Arthur Onslow showed signs of increasing affluence and began to enjoy the sober comforts and orderly pleasures of a handsome town house.

His brother, the General, had achieved rank if not eminence in his profession. He had made the name of Onslow known and respected in the Service; and if he has no remarkable feat of arms to his credit, at least he has the most uncommon distinction of being a General who avoided the worst of military blunders.

The two sons of the General were also doing extremely well. George had risen to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in 1759 and in the following year entered Parliament; while Richard, the sailor, had gone into the Navy at the age of ten, and after serving with Pocock on the East India Station he was commissioned Lieutenant of the *Sunderland* in 1758; and in 1760 was on board the flagship.

This was a fine family record, but the diversity to which I have alluded was to be shown, though not until some time later, in the Speaker's only son, George Onslow.

George, an ugly, dark-haired little man of a sly and saturnine appearance (even from youth), conducted himself respectably enough during the lifetime of his father: indeed, he fitted very well into the honourable, successful and admired group of the Onslow family. He had been educated at Westminster and Peterhouse, and had been smuggled into Parliament through the Newcastle influence as the Member for Rye in 1754. In the previous year (1753) he had married, with great advantage to himself, the daughter of Sir John Shelley. She was also the niece of the Duke of Newcastle.

What George did afterwards, and how he became, through a set of curious chances, the first Earl of Onslow, will form a large part of the ensuing narrative. Here he is only shown as a figure, not yet very definite, in the Onslow group of 1741-61. This group, it will be observed, is that of a family whose promise and achievement (excluding its one titled member, the third Lord Onslow) can scarcely be equalled by any comparable group of the same period.

The Onslow expansion at this time cannot be understood,

nor can its developments be appreciated, without some knowledge of the changing state of England, both social and political. It is particularly necessary to have this knowledge in order to appreciate the circumstances, to visualise the setting and to perceive the motives which, taken together, help to explain the serpentine, wriggling career of George Onslow, eventually to become the first Earl. He indeed is one of the most distinguished members of his family, but his distinction is of a most unpleasant order.

No doubt the story of George Onslow is extremely amusing, and replete with a rich variety of satirical delights; he was no worse, and even a little better, than the politicians and the courtiers of his time (and he was both a politician and a courtier); it may be said that he was never involved personally in a scandal of really splendid magnitude; still, the history of this dark and ugly man, though I trust it may adorn a tale, certainly points to no moral—unless anyone chooses to consider that honesty is the worst of all policies. He abjured almost every decent principle, and received the highest reward.

After the retirement of Walpole and his elevation to the Peerage as first Earl of Orford, the political situation was extremely complex, especially in the House of Commons. It was also extremely paradoxical. Although Walpole had been removed from the House of Commons, he continued to be the most influential figure in politics, and the only statesman who had the trust and respect of the King. Even Carteret, for many years the favourite, and now, in 1743, the actual head of the administration under the nominal leadership of Wilmington, was being discredited by his own brilliant impetuosity and his failure to think seriously of serious matters.

Wilmington died in July (1743) and Carteret endeavoured to have him replaced, as first Lord of the Treasury, by Pulteney, who was now Earl of Bath. He was quietly thwarted by Walpole, who persuaded the King to give this high office to Henry Pelham—a safe and honest mediocrity, and thus the ideal choice at a time when brilliance could only promote continuous disruption.

The "Drunken Administration" of Carteret did indeed stagger on for a while. But Carteret (now Earl Granville), though undismayed and always contemptuously unaffected by opinion, always laughing with unrepentant cycnicism, never lapsing into seriousness for a moment, knew that his administration was crumbling under the steady pressure of the Walpole Whigs—the "old Whiggs" of the glorious Revolution. He did not care. He had been present with the King at the battle of Dettingen, and remained on the friendliest terms with George. As for his political power;—well, that was not a matter of much consequence to him, and he resigned it with a bantering smile.

In trying to understand the alarming and apparently capricious intricacy of eighteenth-century politics in England one has always to remember the intensely personal nature of so much that appeared outwardly as the conscientious and well-considered activities of Parliament. These personal affinities and reactions, these quarrels and alliances, not only between men of different parties but also between men of the same party, were frequently the ruling factors in political decision. And the complexity of the political scene is greatly increased by the fantastic changes of temper and attitude which made friends of enemies and enemies of friends, thus introducing the vagaries of personal emotion where questions of the utmost importance and urgency ought to have been decided by impartial judgment alone. The academic historian who persists in believing that Parliamentary decisions were always the result of pure and earnestly debated policy, and of simple differences of honest opinion between one course and another, or one man and another, is not likely to see his way clearly through the tangle, the jangle and enervating confusion of eighteenth-century history.

All this has to be taken into account when estimating the causes which led to the resignation of Carteret and the rise of the Pelhams. One cause was emphatically the personal antagonism between Carteret and Walpole, and the friendly relations between Walpole and the Pelham brothers. Another reason was the extent of the Pelham influence and interest

in the country. Yet another was the grim hostility between Walpole and Pulteney, with whom he had quarrelled—on purely personal grounds—as far back as 1725. So violent was this quarrel, this emotional hatred, that Pulteney had allied himself with Bolingbroke and assisted him in directing *The Craftsman*, a political periodical whose one purpose was the destruction of Walpole and his government. The alliance between Pulteney and Carteret was therefore natural; though it should be added that Carteret abandoned Pulteney after 1744.

For the Onslow family the rise of the Pelhams was a piece of extraordinary good fortune. Newcastle—that vacillating, timid and ludicrous man—had always been the friend of the Onslows, and his wealth and influence, the immense power of his family connexions, made him one of the most important figures in the political scene. The Speaker knew him extremely well, and it was safe to assume that the Pelham interest would procure the advancement of his son, George Onslow; an assumption that was to prove entirely correct.

When Henry Pelham (Newcastle's brother) became the principal Minister in 1744 he was about forty-seven: Newcastle himself was forty-nine. The new administration was founded upon a principle of toleration or timidity that was politically somewhat ambiguous: it included Whigs of every colour and size, and a few Tories as well. But this "Broad-Bottom Administration" failed to include one of the most ambitious and unforgiving of all the politicians of his age—William Pitt, then thirty-six. Here again, a purely personal dislike was operative at the highest level in the field of politics; for Pitt and Newcastle detested each other. There were, besides, other elements of internal discord, and the Pelhams themselves were in strong and bitter disagreement with each other at the time of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.

Arthur Onslow was never drawn into the jostle and repercussion of any personal feud. His inviolable honour and resolute independence preserved him from all such dangers. When Pelham came into power Onslow told him with brave honesty that he acted always in obedience to his conscience;

which, he said, "was not always pleasing to Ministers." To this, Pelham, with equal honour and honesty, replied that, although he could not be supposed to like a Speaker who opposed him systematically, neither could he be supposed to like a Speaker who was "over-complaisant."

Pelham was not a vigorous war-minister; he saw very clearly that England, while concerned with defeating any European combination that was hostile to her interest and security, or a menace to her trade, could only prosper in those conditions of peace and amity that were favourable to the expansion of commerce. Although the Pretender was encouraged by our defeat at Fontenoy, the Jacobite rising of 1745 was quickly and easily suppressed (while Finchley was preparing to defend London), and the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, though it had little more value than an armistice, was generally looked upon as a triumph for the administration.

The Pelham Ministry, however timid its leaders, was thoroughly dependable in matters of internal finance. Moreover, in spite of the King's unsavoury and unsuccessful intrigues with the Pelhams' enemies, Bath and Granville, the administration had the support of Parliament and the confidence of the people. It was conciliatory and accommodating to a surprising degree; and one of the most astounding of all imaginable accommodations, personal as well as political, was the inclusion of Granville himself (Carteret) in 1751, "broken by excessive drinking," as President of the Council. "I am," he said with a sly grimace, "the King's President."

In a long and somewhat incoherent letter from Lord Hyde to Speaker Onslow, written in 1750 and lamenting "this Age of Variations" and "this Age of Corruption," Hyde states his intention of giving his countenance to the Pelham Ministry. He says:

> "Government is my Principle—I wish always to uphold Government; but I have not yet seen an Administration with which I could personally take part. I thought Sr Robert Walpole a great Minister & a great Man in many Respects . . . & tho' I knew his Faults to this Country I respect his Memory upon some accounts & love his Memory upon others—but neither the Objects, the

means nor the Language of Sr Robert Walpole were respectable enough to engage me then to connect with Him. . . . the Object of the Pelham Administration I take to be right—." (Clandon MSS.)

Such were the Parliamentary complexities, temporarily reduced by the soothing hand of mediocrity, when the Speaker's young son, George Onslow, took his place in the House of Commons—through the Newcastle interest—as the Member for Rye in 1754, at the age of twenty-three. In the same year Henry Pelham died and his brother became the head of the administration.

The Speaker himself, in this year (1754), was in ill-health and was actually contemplating retirement.

Onslow's health, as a factor in his Parliamentary life, has been discussed very ably by Mr. D. H. Jones in the unpublished thesis to which I have already referred. But the nature of this ill-health or disability is not clear. It is known that he was frequently at Bath or Tunbridge Wells: he was at Tunbridge in 1748, when he met Cibber, Garrick, Richardson, Johnson, Pitt and Lyttelton, and where he was accompanied by his wife and daughter. In the previous year (1747) there had been a week's adjournment of the House on account of his illness.

It is possible that the Speaker's health may have been among the causes of the irascibility, the red-faced and angry blustering of an authoritarian, which occasionally broke the dignity and impressiveness of his behaviour. His speeches to those who sinned against the rules of the House were apt to be "long and severe," and when, in 1751, Mr. Crowle was reprimanded by Onslow for having insulted the orders of Parliament, and was ordered to apologise while kneeling on the floor, there was not a little amusement when Crowle, having done as he was directed, rose and ostentatiously wiped his knees, observing tartly that "it was the dirtiest house he had ever been in."

Very shortly after this episode there was one of an even more disturbing nature.

Here the culprit was the Honourable Alexander Murray, the fourth son of the fourth Baron Elibank. He was accused of seditious behaviour, and he entered the House jauntily—

"with an air of confidence," we are told by Horace Walpole, "composed of something between a martyr and a coxcomb."

This was precisely the kind of behaviour that would have infuriated Onslow, and infuriated he was.

"Your obeisances, Sir!" he thundered, "remember your obeisances! You must kneel!"

"Sir, I beg to be excused," replied Mr. Murray, the martyr-coxcomb. "I never kneel but to God."

Such a reply could only be interpreted by Onslow as the purest insolence, nearly amounting to blasphemy, for God was undoubtedly concerned in the dignity of the Chair.

The Speaker at once ordered the Sergeant-at-Arms to remove Mr. Murray, and this produced a series of lengthy and loud arguments. Pelham, taking a hand in the Speaker's own game, quoted precedents; and while Henry Fox was in favour of the Tower, Sir William Yonge recommended a less honourable confinement in Newgate. So intemperate was Admiral Vernon that Onslow several times called him to order. This went on until the small hours of the morning, when Murray was taken in a hackney coach to Newgate under guard. "He sang ballads all the way," says Walpole, "but on entering the gaol burst into tears, kissed the Sergeant, said he was very ill, and must have a physician."

This ridiculous though disquieting affair dragged on for nearly five months. Beyond a doubt the high reputation of Onslow was a little shaken, and he felt himself obliged to vindicate what he had done by "warm and solemn speeches." What made the situation even more uncomfortable was the serious illness of Murray in his Newgate cell; but even the "gaol fever" had no effect upon his idiotic defiance.

The manœuvres in the Murray affair need not be related here: Murray was eventually released, and his return home was the occasion of a brief though noisy personal "triumph." It might perhaps be said that Murray and Onslow had been equally stupid; for the Speaker, though undoubtedly right in his adherence to rule, might at least have conducted the affair, and punished the offender, without such a terrific involvement and uproar. For example, Murray could have been released after a very brief period of

nominal imprisonment; which would have satisfied authority without subjecting the man to the risk of death.

There were other occasions, particularly when Onslow's health was deteriorating, when the Speaker allowed his "warmth" to get the better of his dignity and his judgment; but on no occasion could it have been said that his rulings, in themselves, were incorrect. The great MS. folio in the library at Clandon shows with what enthusiastic and unrelenting precision he noted and annotated hundreds upon hundreds of all imaginable procedures, resolutions and accounts. As a mason lays brick upon brick, so he with line upon line, with note upon note, built for himself an impregnable, unalterable edifice of precedent and rule.

Is there something a little cramped, a little obsessive, in such a character? Is there a touch of madness in the method, or at least a mental aridity in this dependance upon regulation? Is there a lack of courage and resource in the man who thus refers, whenever he is confronted by perplexity or dilemma, to the written word, the automatic decision? On page after page of the great volume, in contrast with the elegant and leisurely penmanship of the clerks, the rapid and agitated hand of Onslow puts down his comments and records:

> "Address to prosecute at Law such persons as counterfait, or otherwise fraudulently make use of the Handwriting of Members of this House. . . .
>
> "The House sitting till the next morning three o' the clock adjourned till eleven o'Clock the same morning. . . .
>
> "That's a mistake. He was *not* admitted to Bail. . . .
>
> "Consider the word *transit*. . . .
>
> "Upon the Speaker's declaring for the Noes, a Member said the Yeas had it. The Speaker sd the Yeas must go forth, and one person only went out, and none left for the Tellers on that side. The Speaker, after the door had been shut, called to have it open'd, & for the Member, who went out, to come in, and then declared again that the Noes had it, without any Telling. . . ."

The notes on the proper use of the Mace run to nearly three of the folio pages, and there is no conceivable circumstance relating to the business of the House and the be-

haviour of its Members which is not elucidated, or confused, by passage after passage in Arthur's wriggling and rambling script.

Yet there were times when the ruler was overruled, times when the grand system, Arthur's own scriptural system, failed, and the sense of the House overcame the wishes and arguments of the Speaker. This occurred in 1757 when Onslow proposed that Byng should be expelled from the House, in order that no Member of Parliament should suffer an ignominious death; and the House rejected his proposal. And here the "warmth" of Onslow was exceeded by the hot intolerance of Pitt, who was called to order no fewer than three times. (This was another instance of personal dislike, for Pitt, who had been atrociously rude to Newcastle, had no patience with "old Whiggs" like Arthur.) The same thing occurred in 1759, and again in connexion with a court-martial: the trial of Lord George Sackville for cowardice at the battle of Minden. The Speaker objected that, as Sackville was a Member of Parliament and no longer an officer, he could not be examined before a military tribunal; and again Onslow was overruled.

Of Mr. Onslow's more social aspects during his tenure of the Chair there is a lack of detailed information. In 1752, when he moved from Leicester Street to Falconbergh House, a town mansion in Soho Square, he certainly became an entertainer: he gave dinners, he instituted levees. And perhaps it was at this time that the silversmiths of London produced the "Onslow tea-spoon"—a very pretty spoon with the top of its handle curved round in a scroll or hook.

That the Speaker lived in moderate splendour is shown by Johnson's anecdote of Richardson, a visitor at Soho Square. When he went to Falconbergh House "his desire of distinction was so great that he used to give large vails to the Speaker Onslow's servants, that they might treat him with respect."

As to the house, the finest in the Square and one of the finest in London, built at the end of the seventeenth century, it was occupied after the death of the Speaker by the Duke

of Argyll, and in modern times by the celebrated pickle-making firm of Crosse and Blackwell.

With the accession of George III in 1760 it was evident that a new political orientation was to be expected, unfavourable to the strange Pitt-Newcastle combination that was then in power. One can hardly avoid the supposition that Speaker Onslow's decision to retire, though mainly due to age and ill-health, was not unaffected by the ominous chill of impending events.

He was now seventy. The thought of quitting the Chair in the House of Commons, which he had occupied so happily, so momentously and so honourably for thirty-three years, was extremely painful to him; but he was a man of cultured and literary tastes and there was no reason for him to suppose that he would not be happy in retirement.

His wife was still alive, his son (now married) lived with him in Falconbergh House and had the appearance—unfortunately misleading—of being an earnest and upright young politician.

Nothing could have been more characteristic of Arthur Onslow than one of his last actions as the Speaker: it was a triumphant, a culminating assertion of procedure, the most superb of all his insistencies; for one can hardly go further in such matters than the holding-up of the Sovereign himself—and this is what he did. Could there have been a more resounding *finale*, a finer moment for the dropping of the curtain?

It was January 1761, and the King was in the House of Lords, waiting to give his assent to the Money Bill. The King waited and the Lords waited; they could do nothing else until the Speaker appeared at the Bar. And still they waited; and still there was no Speaker. There were questions, agitations, whisperings, titters, growlings: what had become of old Arthur? But old Arthur was behaving, as usual, with exemplary correctness. He could not leave the House of Commons; indeed, he could not regard the House and the Speaker as being officially in existence at all. Fewer than forty Members were present, and Arthur could not, would not, budge until he had the necessary quorum.

Shortly afterwards, on the 18th of March 1761, he bade farewell to the House.

This was a deeply moving occasion. Even those who had thought Onslow a pompous, praise-loving autocrat, owing his prestige entirely to a dry, harsh and imperious assertion of precedent and rule, a man whose austerity and integrity were plainly professional, concealing behind an immense thickness of parade and ostentation a shallow, ungenerous mind—even those who thus misjudged the man felt their hearts warmed into sympathy.

That elegant fribble, the neatly malevolent Horace Walpole, was present in the House and recorded his own impressions of the scene. And even he, so careful to avoid the sturdy and honest emotions of ordinary folk, was not unmoved.

First of all he tells us how Sir John Philipps moved the address of thanks—"but so wretchedly, that the sensibility the House showed on the occasion flowed only from their hearts—."

Then "others threw in their word of panegyric," and a statue of the Speaker, to be set up in some public place, was proposed by "Mr. More of Shrewsbury." He was followed by the stupidly jocular Velters Cornwall, "teazing the Speaker under pretence of complimenting him; while the good old man sat overpowered with gratitude, and weeping over the testimonies borne to his virtue. He rose at last, and closed his public life in the most becoming manner—."

The Speaker was moved by the deepest emotions of gratitude and regret. He was occupying for the last time a position which, for him, had represented the fullness and the happiness of his life. There had been, necessarily, many scenes in which he deliberately acted a part, and sometimes a part that was priggish and overbearing; but he was not acting now, when, with a dignity that was a little tremulous, a voice by no means unfaltering, he replied to the expressions of kindness, appreciation and regret which came from every part of the House.

"I was never under so great a difficulty in my life," he said, "to know what to say in this place as I am at present—

Indeed it is almost too much for me. I can stand against misfortunes and distress. . . . But I am not able to stand this overflow of good will and honour to me. It overpowers me; and had I all the strength of language, I could never express the full sentiments of my heart upon this occasion, of thanks and gratitude."

And then came the most touching words of all: "I owe everything to this House—."

He finished with a steadier, more considered manner: "And now, Sirs, I am to take my last leave of you. It is, I confess, with regret, because the being within these walls has ever been the chief pleasure of my life. But my advanced age and infirmities, and some other reasons, call for retirement and obscurity."

What did he mean by "other reasons"? Free speculation is inadmissible in a sober history, but there would appear to be some justification for supposing that his "other reasons" were not entirely unpolitical. He knew that the personal disagreement between Pitt and Newcastle, and the encroaching absolutism of a young and exceedingly foolish King, would quickly destroy the Whig administration and would substitute a form of Government opposed in all its fundamental principles to his own. Thus, although age and infirmity were the principal factors in his retirement, it is not unlikely that the "other reasons" made the retirement less deplorable, more endurable, than it would have been without them.

The House presented the King with an address asking for "some signal mark of his royal favour" to be conferred upon Mr. Onslow. The royal favour could hardly be extended with overflowing benevolence to the friend of Newcastle and the "old Whiggs," but the King replied, or was advised to reply, "that he had the justest sense of the long services and great merit of Mr. Onslow . . . and had already taken the same into consideration; and that he would do therein what should appear most proper, agreeable to the desire of his faithful Commons."

It would clearly not have been "most proper," in the King's view, to confer a title upon Onslow. What he did was at least

generous. He granted him a pension of £3000 a year with reversion to his son, which, according to Colchester (Charles Abbot) when he put in his own claim to a pension, was "more than equal to the full emoluments of his office." (Colchester was Speaker in 1802, 1806, 1807 and 1812.)

In May the Speaker was presented with the Freedom of the City of London, the first of the Speakers of the House of Commons to receive this honour. He refused the customary gold box. In the same year (1761) he was admitted to the Company of Grocers.

The England of the twenty years which I have tried to review in this chapter was changing socially as well as politically. The observable phases in social evolution were three: the increasing brutalisation of the lower classes, the rise of the money-makers or Nabobs, and the final stand of the aristocracy as a ruling caste. All three of these phases or processes were greatly emphasised in the years which followed, but they were already marked. In 1751 a committee was appointed "to consider on amending the laws enacted against the vices of the lower people, which were increased to a degree of robbery and murder beyond example." The amusements of these people were represented by cock-fighting and bull-baiting—"a mad bull to be dressed up with fireworks and turned loose . . . a dog to be dressed up with fireworks over him . . . a cat to be tied to the bull's tail—."

But if the sports of the people were almost unimaginably savage, the diversions of the aristocracy were not less immoral. Luxury was now passing from the phase of elegance into that of coarse ostentation and lewd indulgence. Art had become the mere accessory of fashionable life, and a taste for the Chinese and the Gothic replaced the earlier delight in classical purity; while the dark surge of a liking for horrors began to wash up in its bloody or muddy waters the raw materials of the later romanticism.

The craze for lotteries and every sort of private gambling, the passion for masquerades, the flippant fragility of the married woman, all these indicated a general weakening of

the social structure. Effeminacy prevailed, while sodomy walked the streets and openly "took the bread from much more honest whores." Nor was the chorus of Sodom inaudible among those who praised or led the literary fashions.

Apathy in the Church was matched by lethargy at the Universities—especially at Oxford, persistently Jacobite. Learning was at the lowest of levels; and the discipline of real study was unknown, except to a few eccentrics.

Hardly anything was done by administration to improve the condition of the masses or seriously to check the manifold evils of gin-drinking; for Jekyll's endeavour to restrain this by the imposition of duties had the effect of bringing into existence what we now call a "black market." It is true that Hardwicke's Marriage Act (1753) did put a stop to the "Fleet marriages" which had become so flagrant a scandal; and in the same year the Pelhams organised a new police force of picked men under the orders of the Bow Street magistrates. But the only influence which, in spite of the savage opposition of the country squires and their murderous mobs, gradually improved and enlightened the state of the "lower people" was the Methodism of John Wesley.

One may tentatively put forward on the brighter side of what was on the whole a very dark period of English social history, a cult of cricket and of well-ordered gardens, the patronage of talent by ministerial help, and a number of improvements in agriculture—greatly increased at a later period by the interest of the King and the practical work of Townshend, Coke of Holkham, Bedford and Rockingham. There was also a general advance in literacy, shown by the number of new magazines and the appearance of literary reviews and also by the conversational importance of being able to talk about books. None the less, people of the *haut monde* were coarse and loose, both in sentiment and in behaviour; and it is perhaps the solitary merit of George III that his own mode of life and the dull propriety of his immediate circle were of considerable effect in slowly improving the manners and morals of the well-to-do, thus helping to cure the disease which Lecky described as "the defect of virtue."

Arthur Onslow's promising young son, George, was therefore starting on his career in a period of transition; a period marked politically by the disorganisation of the Whigs, partly because of the shuffling incompetence of Newcastle, partly because of the suspiciously theatrical declamations of Pitt, who could impose an awed silence upon the House by the mere iteration of the word "Sugar." Politically the position of an honest Whig was now extremely difficult, and that of a dishonest Whig (like George Onslow) almost equally so. But the unedifying though amusing history of George Onslow will be unrolled in later chapters.

CHAPTER XI

The King's Men

GEORGE ONSLOW had not followed the family example of marrying an heiress. He had married a lady; again a deviation from the practice of many prosperous Onslows. His wife, whom he married at the age of twenty-three, as I have already recorded, was the daughter of Sir John Shelley of Michelgrove—Henrietta, whom some of her contemporaries refer to as "Harriot." That he was a relatively poor man during the Speaker's lifetime is shown by his mention of his father's "munificence" in 1763, when George was deprived of sundry profitable offices. In Henrietta he had a wife of great charm, literary tastes and a witty style in conversation. A portrait of her at Clandon shows her as a young woman of pale though voluptuous beauty, dressed in the fashionable disarray of the times. When the Speaker retired in 1761 and moved from Soho Square to Great Russell Street (to be near the British Museum in which he was actively interested) George and his wife secured a house in Curzon Street; in a quarter of the town that was then only moderately respectable, though steadily improving. On the site of Curzon Street the May Fair was held until 1756: it lasted for six weeks and entirely demoralised the district—as also did the crowd who passed on the way to see the hanging at Tyburn.

George and his wife had two sons: Thomas Onslow, born in 1754; and Edward Onslow, born in 1758. Two other sons, and a daughter, died young.

Placed in the Parliament of 1754 by Newcastle, George Onslow began his political existence as a straightforward Whig in the Onslow tradition—that is, a Revolution Whig of the older school. He sat under his father in this and the succeeding Parliaments till 1761; and at the general elec-

tion of that year (after the retirement of the Speaker) he was returned for the county of Surrey.

Now, the impending decay and ruin of the Whigs, discernible to everybody in 1761, placed young Onslow in a singularly awkward position. Although he was not in any way hampered by the inconveniences of honesty, he lacked the courage and the countenance which would have been required at that time for an entire reversal of direction. He had also some respect for his father's principles. His temporary advantage lay in the fact that he had been inconspicuous, for it can hardly be supposed that the youthful colonel of a regiment of Surrey militia, and the silent Member for an unimportant pocket borough, was a person of much consequence. His weakness, on the other hand, was always revealed in the defects of his political sense, and in a timid man's desire for immediate safety rather than for ultimate gain.

Had he taken into account the rhythm and rebound of Parliamentary opinion and of popular moods, he would have seen the more solid advantage, even of a simulated loyalty to his own side and his own adopted principles. Here he failed. And here began, though at first without attracting very much attention, the devious manœuvres of a third-rate amateur political schemer. It would be less true to say that he made a decision—he avoided the making of decisions—than to say that he began to adopt a course, the course of timorous vigilance, to develop, after the death of both Newcastle and his father in 1768, into more flagrant opportunism and occasional stridency.

Shortly after the move to Curzon Street, Onslow was chosen a Knight of the Shire for Surrey and was given the post of Surveyor of the King's Gardens and Waters, which he refers to as "a very genteel office." He also received from his father an allowance of about £1600 a year. His domestic situation was thus extremely comfortable. But he had ambitions.

Clandon was in his eye, and the succession to the barony. Moreover his cousin, George the Colonel, had become one of the Members for Guildford in 1760. The Onslow family

was in a good entrenched position from which to make, at the proper time, a political advance;—but when, and where, and how? These were George's problems, and those of many other men at this time. If those problems are to be duly appreciated we must know (or else recall) the entirely new political situation, the appalling situation, brought about by the accession of George III, a flurried and wrong-headed youth of twenty-two already showing the signs of psychogenic disorder.

George III, although he declared that he "gloried in the name of Briton," did not consider that the British reputation was in any way lowered by a system of political bribery which far exceeded anything put into practice by Walpole and the Whigs. His theory of Government was the absolute control of the State by the King's party under the personal direction of the King himself. In his own view he could neither think nor do anything that was wrong, for he believed himself to be inspired and supported by the Protestant Providence in its most assured form. He was a man of small intellect and of mean character, though formidable on account of his obstinacy and a gabbling spite that was never modified by considerations of decency, dignity and honour. To say this is not to say that he was always consciously deceitful. On the contrary, he was persuaded that his actions and ideas were founded upon the most authentic and evident of religious principles, the powerful instigation of Britannia's private though ubiquitous God; and he led the country into the greatest as well as the most humiliating of all her political disasters in the genuine belief that he acted for the good of his people and the righteous dignity of his throne. It would be the gravest of injustices and inaccuracies to describe him as a wicked or selfish man: he was, quite simply, a calamitous blockhead. "A worse King," said Byron, "never left a realm undone."

This unhappy King was misdirected from his early youth. The death of his foolish father, "poor Fred," when George was thirteen, might have been a blessing, had it not been for his equally foolish mother, who chose for her son's preceptor a man whose chief qualifications for this important post were

a fine leg and a theatrical air—John Stuart, third Earl of Bute. This man secured the warmest affections of the widowed princess and the almost hysterical admiration of her son.

Before long Bute was everywhere: he was at Kew, pretending to improve the gardens; at Carlton House, at Leicester House, commanding and yet softly and insidiously respectful; a sort of domesticated reptile, potentially venomous.

Such influences, acting upon a mind and a constitution that were never robust, could only produce the most lamentable results. And so, when George came to the throne in 1760, urged by his mother and his "dearest friend" to "be a King," he began at once to build up his own particular sort of dictatorship.

The times were in his favour. As Lord John Russell pointed out, it was politically a period of small parties "divided from each other by personal predilections." When Pitt resigned in October 1761, forced out of office by the intolerable machinations of Bute, the whole of the constitutional edifice was clearly seen to be in danger. This danger could of course be attributed to the dissensions of the Whigs, and that was partly true; but the real menace lay in the deliberate subversion of every one of the English political ideals. The popular voice, though loud and ribald, was at first of no effect; and it is well to remember that, with a population of about eight millions, only some 150,000 Englishmen possessed votes—and of those votes, by far the greater number were purchasable.

Bute became the chief Minister in May 1762. By April 1763 he had become so generally detested that he was obliged to resign. The plans of the King and his men were temporarily checked. Even so, while seeming to exploit the lack of coherence among the Whigs, King George made the worst of all possible choices by placing in power (after Pitt's refusal to form a ministry) the party of Grenville and Bedford. Yet no sooner were these men in office than Bute and the King were doing all they could to get rid of them.

For the next seven years—that is, until the establishment

of the royal autocracy under North—ministry succeeded ministry in a hopeless tangle of jealousy, intrigue and the wildest corruption. No semblance of coherent policy remained, parties could only be given the names of their managers, and all political form was lost in the angry bewilderment of confusing debates. Pitt, writing to his wife in 1766, justly observed that "all is confusion as usual." Nor were matters at all improved by the shameful incompetence of those who were now aligning themselves on the side of the King. "There is not a man on the Court side in the House of Commons," said Chesterfield, "who has either abilities or words enough to call a coach."

A phase of "national and individual woes" had now begun, in which the course of an ambitious though cautious young man like George Onslow, always anxious to be well placed on the winning side, was one of dreadful uncertainty. Which *was* the winning side? Who was to be supported or courted, and who was to be abandoned?

Moreover, two of the most influential of the Onslow supporters were now in disgrace. The venerable though unvenerated Newcastle had been thrust from office, after a cackle of stuttering insults, by the King. All those who had been given appointments by Newcastle were dismissed.

The other friend of the Onslows who might have been depended upon as a political helper, Earl Temple of Stowe, was equally out of favour owing to his opposition to Bute and his open support of Wilkes. None the less, Temple was not politically extinguished, he had "a pert familiarity" and all the gifts of a muddy schemer (first the friend and then the enemy of Pitt), and was in some hopes of being able to form a family ministry of his own.

Certainly the way of the trimmer was exceedingly hard, and at first the two George Onslows—Black George and his cousin the Colonel—placed themselves with extreme caution on, or near, the popular side.

George Onslow's attitude, at this stage, was in some degree the result of his friendship with John Wilkes, the brave, bantering, scurrilous and energetic advocate of liberty.

(*Photograph: A. C. Cooper Ltd.*)

Thomas, afterwards Second Earl of Onslow (1754-1827), as a child. Attributed to Thomas Hudson, but possibly by Hogarth. From the picture in the possession of the Earl of Onslow.

It is significant of the lack of statesmanship at this period that Wilkes should have become one of the most important figures in English history. That he was less than this cannot well be asserted. He had entered Parliament in 1757 at the age of thirty, and not long afterwards became the lewd and laughing accomplice of Dashwood and Sandwich in the Medmenham revels. But the fall of Pitt and the rise of Bute showed him the dangers of the times and he turned his attention to more serious matters.

He was grotesque in appearance and of abominable habits, yet it was Wilkes who now became the most zealous and effective supporter of the rights of the people. In this robust and rollicking assertion of rights, Wilkes had all the advantages of being extremely amusing in male society. When Gibbon (in the Hampshire Militia) met Wilkes in 1762 he had to own that he had "scarcely ever met with a better companion; he has inexhaustible spirits, infinite wit and humour and a great deal of knowledge; but a thorough profligate in principle as in practice, his life stained with every vice, and his conversation full of blasphemy and indecency." Thus, too, he was remembered by Wraxall: "In private society, particularly at table, he was pre-eminently agreeable . . . converting his very defects of person, manner and enunciation to purposes of merriment. . . . Even in corporeal ruin, and obviously approaching the termination of his career, he formed the charm of the assembly." Grafton was non-committal—"Mr. Wilkes *may* have dined with me twice or thrice—."

On the 5th of June 1762 Wilkes produced the first number of a lively democratic journal, *The North Briton*, satirically titled in opposition to *The Briton* of Smollett. Its price was a mere twopence-halfpenny. He was at this time the Member for Aylesbury and a colonel in the Bucks militia.

Onslow undoubtedly made the acquaintance of Wilkes through his friendship with Temple. In 1762 Wilkes was thirty-five and Onslow thirty-three. Young Onslow was never too fastidious in morals or in propriety of language. These two young men and the elderly Temple got on

famously together. Wilkes was addressed by Temple as "my dear Colonel," "my dear Marcus Cato," "my dear Senator," in letters that were signed "your affectionately devoted—." In 1763 Temple wrote a poem to Wilkes that began: "What Muse thy glory shall presume to sing?"

This was the year of the celebrated No. 45 of *The North Briton*, in which the speech of the King in Parliament, and obliquely the King himself, were attacked with unsparing ferocity. It was published in April. Without hesitation the law officers declared that No. 45 was a seditious libel; the house of Wilkes in Great George Street was entered on the night of the 29th of April by three officers of the Crown, and Wilkes was arrested. The printers of *The North Briton* were committed for trial.

What, in the meantime, were the political activities of George Onslow? They were very curious.

He had made up his mind to keep in close touch with Newcastle, who, timorous, old and insulted, was now living in his noble white house of Claremont. After all, he might still be of use. This fidgety and rather frightened old man was master of an enormous rent-roll, and he still hankered, with a sordid and unseasonable tenacity, after the prestige of office: of any office in any administration.

Onslow therefore made a point of "waiting upon his Grace" with all the odds and ends of information that he was able to "pick up in Town." The young puppy, in fact, was the attendant of the old though watchful dog. Not only was this attendance "a happiness," it was also "a duty." Mr. Onslow could assure his noble friend that not more than two or three of the gentlemen of Surrey, "at most," were ready to drink the health of Bute. He then gives him the less pleasing news that he has been deprived of his "genteel office" as the Surveyor of the King's Gardens and Waters.

On his side, Newcastle appreciated the services of his "nephew Onslow": he sends his compliments to the old Speaker, "that great and worthy man," and assures George that he is "ever most affectionately yours."

In March 1763 George Onslow was one of a large party

of Whigs who dined at Devonshire House with the Duke. Also present were Newcastle, Temple, Pitt, Hardwicke and Rockingham. It was a very notable dinner. An opposition club was formed, and the members of this arranged to meet at Wildman's Tavern in Albemarle Street.

But the Whigs, though willing enough to dine or club, were not a united opposition; the personal desire for office was too strong for loyalty. They were divided, so far as divisions were coherent or discernible, in three groups: (1) the Rockingham Whigs and the remains of Newcastle's party (including the Onslows); (2) the Bedford Whigs; and (3) the adherents of Pitt and Temple. It will thus be seen that Onslow already had a foot in each of two camps—the camp of Newcastle and the camp of Temple—and was ready to move definitely towards one or the other whenever it suited him.

The spearhead, the ultimate symbol of the opposition, was Jack Wilkes. Although imprisoned for a while in the Tower, he was released by Chief Justice Pratt (afterwards Lord Camden), and in June he entered Aylesbury with a troop of cheering gentlemen on horseback. The King had lost his first round.

George Onslow wrote ecstatically to Newcastle telling him that he had "infinite pleasure" in acquainting his Grace with the fact that Mr. Wilkes was at liberty. At the same time—discreetly trimming already—he feels extremely sorry for the poor King, who must be deeply hurt by the nastiness of the mob and the unpopularity of "those Ministers he thinks fit to employ." "The genius of this country," says George in a pompous period, "is Whiggism." In July the acquittal of the printers of *The North Briton* again raises him to a pitch of ecstasy. His letters to Newcastle show that he was in contact with every section of the Whig forces, though not irrevocably committed to any.

Temple, as Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, had been ordered to deprive Wilkes of his militia command: he did so with much mirth and a compliment, and was promptly dismissed from his own Lieutenancy.

However, Wilkes, Temple and Onslow were all "in high

spirits" (Wilkes to Temple, July 23rd 1763) and it was gratifying to observe that Surrey was mainly in favour of Wilkes and the Whigs. Nor was George Onslow unmindful of his own interest in the constituency.

On the 5th of September 1763 he was at the White Hart Inn in Guildford, where Mr. Ledger, the Mayor, gave "an elegant entertainment, consisting of a turtle, a brace of bucks, with a great quantity of other game and a handsome desert." The company included Lord Onslow of Clandon, Lord Middleton, Sir Francis Vincent, the two George Onslows, and "most of the neighbouring gentlemen, clergy, &c."

Then Wilkes got himself into more serious trouble, which involved Onslow as well.

Having set up a private press he printed off a wittily obscene poem called *An Essay on Woman*: a parody of Pope and of the hymn *Veni Creator*. There were appended to this horrible indecency a number of lewd and ludicrous notes, purporting to have been written by Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester. In these notes Wilkes had the merry assistance of Thomas Potter, the son of another bishop, and the alleged lover of Warburton's wife. As to the nature of the poem, the words of an outraged contemporary may be quoted: "The natural abilities of the ass are made the subject of an unclean description . . . and that sacred expression Thrice Blessed Glorious Trinity is compelled . . . to convey an idea to the reader impure, astonishing, and horrible."

A copy of the *Essay* was obtained in a somewhat shady way by the Reverend Mr. Kidgell and was handed over to the Solicitor of the Treasury.

At this time Wilkes was in France, where his daughter Polly was at school. When he returned to England, early in November 1763, his movements were closely watched and recorded by spies employed by the Secretaries of State. These movements involved George Onslow somewhat dangerously, as we can see from the reports published in the *Grenville Papers* in 1852:

"Tuesday, November 8th.—Mr. Wilkes went out this morning at half an hour after eight o'clock, in a hackney-coach to Mr. Beck-

ford's, the present Lord Mayor, in Soho Square . . . from thence he went to Mr. Onslow's in Curzon Street, May Fair, and stayed an hour and a half. Mr. Wilkes brought Mr. Onslow in a hackney-coach to Spring Gardens, where Mr. Onslow got out, and said he had some business there, but would call on Mr. Wilkes presently; from thence he went home. . . . At half after two o'clock Mr. Wilkes, Mr. Onslow, and Mr. Cotes came out together, and parted at the top of George Street.

"Sunday, November 13th.—Mr. Wilkes went to St. Margaret's Church this morning, and stayed till church was over. . . . At half after one o'clock he went out in his chair to the French Ambassador's . . . from thence he went to Mr. Onslow's . . . but did not stay. . . . At half an hour after five o'clock this evening he went out in his chair to Mr. Onslow's in Curzon Street, and stayed until near eight o'clock—."

Two days after the last entry, the attack on Wilkes was opened in the House of Commons. Insulted by Samuel Martin, Wilkes demanded satisfaction, a duel was fought, and Wilkes received a bullet in the side. He behaved with great courage and astonishing magnanimity: believing himself mortally wounded, he urged Martin to escape, and said he would never reveal the circumstances of the affair. But Wilkes recovered, and very wisely fled to France. He was outlawed in the following year (1764).

George Onslow wrote the most affectionate and admiring letters to Wilkes, whom he begged to look after himself and not to allow his "wonderful flow of spirits" to get him into further trouble. The letters of Wilkes to Onslow, on the other hand, though urbane, are perceptibly guarded, for Wilkes understood the subtleties of the human character and had a prophetic eye for a sneak. But he was cordial enough when he sent his compliments to "the good old Speaker and to Mrs. Onslow."

Men cannot foresee their own veerings or vacillations, not even when they have the trimmer's instinctive caution, and Onslow was remarkably indiscreet when he wrote to Wilkes: "I am unalterably, Dear Wilks [*sic*], your faithful and affectionate humble Servant—." Some of his letters to Wilkes were printed a few years later, with excusable malice,

by Horne Tooke and by Junius. They are memorable in the records of shiftiness and apostasy:

> "My dear old Friend," Onslow writes to Wilkes, "—Honest Humphry has din'd with me here to day, and we have just drank your Health as we have often done—." He then praises "the amazing wit and abilities" of Wilkes, and concludes, "Believe me, dear John, your mentioning me as you do gratifies my pride, as it will always do to show myself your Friend and humble Servant—."

The leaning of George Onslow towards the newer sort of Whiggism, in which he was now inclined to place his trust, was a little too obvious, and he was presently reminded how important it was to keep on an even keel.

He was becoming less attentive to Newcastle, less regular in sending his despatches to Claremont or Bath. Very hurriedly, after a complaint from his noble friend, he assured him that he would be, and indeed was, "the most melancholy and unhappy man in the world," if his Grace thought him capable of "unfeelingness." The reports of the Whig dinners are resumed, with an account of Temple speaking "most violently and openly." At the same time, Onslow was in close alliance with the brilliant and irresponsible Charles Townshend.

Mr. Onslow was now dividing his time between Ember Court and the house in Curzon Street. He had always disliked his Clandon cousin, Lord Onslow, and does not seem to have visited him very often. For him the chief concern of life was political prognosis; keeping an eye on the jumping cat and being ready to jump, as though spontaneously, whenever the jump was decisive. As for public and international affairs, he cared nothing at all for such things, even if he was capable of understanding them. And the intricacy of events might well have baffled a much abler man.

Both Newcastle and Onslow were now hoping for the collapse of the Grenville-Bedford Ministry, and the formation of a new administration with Rockingham at the head of it. Nor was the hope unreasonable. At this time (1765) Rockingham was thirty-five, a man lacking political experience, but honourable, well-bred, and much liked by his associates. Although he was nervously diffident, it was

known that he was incapable of treachery; and in such times this was more than equal to high distinction.

Newcastle was anxious to know about Onslow's talks with Temple. There was increasing Whig activity at the dinner discussions, the tavern conspiracies, the closer debates at Saville House. At Bath, Newcastle gave "a Tea in the great Room" to nearly seven hundred people, who "seem'd," even if they were not actually so, to be "Persons of Condition." Here he received Onslow's despatches "by the Machine."

In May 1765 Onslow conceived the happy idea that both of his powerful allies, Newcastle and Temple, might form a joint administration. No contrivance could have suited Onslow better; and, as Newcastle would serve with anyone, provided that he was able to scramble into office again, it seemed feasible enough. But, on the whole, Onslow was more of a Temple man than a Newcastle man. He had in fact the promise of employment in the Treasury if Temple were in power.

Let him, then, cultivate rather more assiduously the good will of Temple. In June the Onslows were at Stowe. The talk of Temple and Onslow (not likely to have been communicated to Newcastle) was concerned with an alliance between Temple and Pitt. It was now clear that Grenville would have to resign, and a letter published in the *Grenville Papers* (1852) from Onslow to Temple shows the hopeful mood of the trimmer. It is dated June 25th, 1765:

> "The confidential conversation I had the honour of having last night with you and Mr. Pitt encourages me to trouble you with this to implore your acceptance of the Treasury . . . for the sake of the Country, for the sake of us all. . . . I *know* you will be supported in the House of Commons by the City of London, and the Voice of the whole Kingdom; and I will venture to say, that with all the difficulties that it must be owned there are to be encountered, it will be the most popular administration that ever was in this country."

The King had made overtures (in desperation) to Temple: but Temple refused office; Pitt would not come in without him; and Lyttelton and Townshend also held aloof. These were indeed weeks of "administrative anarchy" (not unlike the French political situation in recent years), and at last a

Rockingham Ministry was formed, which excluded Temple and Pitt but included the inglorious Newcastle. The occasion was celebrated vinously by George Onslow, who was "very ill all night" afterwards. Newcastle became Lord Privy Seal, and Onslow was appointed a Lord of the Treasury.

This was immensely gratifying, but the relations between Onslow and Temple were now unpleasantly complex. A well-considered letter to Stowe was obviously demanded, and this was accordingly posted from Ember Court:

> "I long to go through with you all the intricacies and difficulties of the last three weeks, and explain to you the extreme difficult part I had to steer through them, more perhaps than any one man of them all." He then apologises for having accepted his post at the Treasury, and again expresses his desire for a long explanatory talk: "It will be the greatest misfortune I can know, to see we differ in the smallest degree—."

At the general election of 1765 a "new Ballad," sung to the appropriate tune of "There was a Jovial Beggar," was heard at Epsom when George Onslow was nominated as one of the Members for Surrey:

> "Known Foe to foul Corruption,
> He prides in being just;
> And wou'd not, to gain Kingdoms,
> Abuse his sacred Trust."

The words were not so appropriate as the tune. . . .

However, the Rockingham or "lutestring" Government was only a makeshift, and Onslow felt that he would now be well advised to keep his eye on Pitt and, if possible, to keep Pitt's eye on him. Somewhat officious letters were therefore sent to Pitt at Hayes (*Chatham Correspondence*, 1838). Early in 1766 these letters are those of a self-appointed confidential agent, recording events in the House of Commons. Pitt is told about the reading of "the American papers," in order that he may be spared the trouble of coming up to London. "The House is so fatigued with these long sittings . . . that I doubt whether they will be prevailed on to sit on Saturday." And here, inadvertently, Onslow finds himself on the right though losing side; but not for long. America must be

relieved in order to save the trade and the good name of Britain—"Her dignity is concerned in doing justice, and in giving happiness and tranquillity to every individual that lives under her protection." In another letter George Onslow thanks Pitt for some "expressions" concerning himself, which he will preserve (he does not seem to have done so)—"that my family may know hereafter, I was within the notice and esteem of Mr. Pitt." He dreads a combination "between the late administration and those who call themselves Lord Bute's friends." He favoured the repeal of the Stamp Act. "The turn which affairs in the closet have taken confirm [*sic*] the wisdom of your advice and way of thinking on that Subject."

By this time George Onslow was beginning to acquire political influence and was being solicited by less important men. Evidence of this, in one of the most blatant letters which a job-hunter ever wrote, I have discovered in the Clandon archives. It was written in July 1766, at the time of Rockingham's dismissal. The writer was the Reverend John Butler, of whom we have seen something already. In shameless candour and serene effrontery it is unsurpassable:

> "I took the Liberty of writing to Lord Rockingham last Wednesday, on occasion of the present Church Vacancies, and on Thursday I had the Mortification to hear the News of his Removal. I am sadly out of luck in these things, and shall give over all thoughts of them, unless you can make an Impression upon Mr. Pitt or the Duke of Grafton in my favor. I wish it could be done with respect to something that may now be vacated. At a farther distance of time many Applications and Promises may stand in my way, and I am not by nature qualified for a Scramble. . . . The Papers tell me the Dean of Peterborough is to be the new Bishop. If so, his Deanery would be very acceptable. I have reason to think, the Dean of Winchester will come in for something. His Deanery would be still more acceptable. I am persuaded a warm Party Application would do the business, and better at this critical Juncture than ever. . . . I wrote to Mr. Townshend, and have no room to doubt his Concurrence—."

The trimmers and the trimmed were now in full activity. Pitt had entered the Peerage as the Earl of Chatham and was

the associate of Grafton at the head of the Ministry. But the Earl of Chatham was too ill, and the Duke of Grafton too much occupied with his mistress Nancy, to give much attention to affairs of State. The only man who did anything, and what he did was usually wrong, was the mercurial Townshend. All Parliamentary outlines are lost in a muddle of dimly contending mediocrities and a confusion of intrigue. Bute was busy. The "Bloomsbury gang" of the Bedfords held a vague position in the offing. The Grenville and Rockingham Whigs (if such a term as Whig is applicable to these amorphous rallies) looked about them with dismay at the general chaos. The King blithely informed General Irwin that "ce métier de politique . . . ce n'est pas le métier d'un gentilhomme"—which indeed was true, and applied nowhere more cogently than to his Majesty himself.

Mr. George Onslow still writes letters to the Duke of Newcastle, still assuring him that he has "no greater pleasure than shewing on all occasions that grateful attention I owe your Grace and the Dutchess of Newcastle." The letters are conveyed by "the Fish Man" from Curzon Street to Claremont and from Claremont to Curzon Street. But the times are changing and George himself will change (who more able to do so?) with the times.

CHAPTER XII

Black George

ON the 29th of December 1767 Lord Trevor wrote to Grenville: "The old Speaker is given over of a mortification in his leg." Of this "mortification," after much pain, Arthur Onslow, the Speaker, died on the 17th of February 1768. His wife had died five years previously.

Speaker Onslow had many of the appearances and the virtues of a great man, some of the weaknesses of a small man, but none of the paltry vices of a place-hunter; though it must be allowed that he assisted many others in their place-hunting. After his retirement in 1761 he had enjoyed the placid and reliable pleasures of collecting pictures, books and engravings. He was the most urbane, the most adequately civilised, of his family. Unlike the Clandon Onslows (whom he rarely visited) he had no liking for horse or hound, no interest in acres, timber, streams, crops and the affairs of a rural district. He preferred the pleasant meetings of the Kit-Cat, or graceful and amusing talk, sober talk, in a company of chosen friends.

Above all, as an old man, he delighted (as Hatsell relates) in talking to young people about the laws and the constitution; and this he did with a kindled spirit and a mellow eloquence that always delighted his listeners as well.

Although he was not a conspicuous friend of the eminent, he was loved and esteemed by people of every condition and age, both simple and learned. Some books, of no great importance, were dedicated to him, and a gentle versifier wrote a little ode "To the Right Honourable Arthur Onslow, In the Country, on receiving a Rose from that Gentleman":

> "With joy unusual glow'd my Breast,
> When thou, retir'd to shady Bowers,
> Where Peace is thine, and virtuous Rest,
> Gav'st me, with Smiles, the Queen of Flowers.

The slightest Gift, in thy lov'd Name,
Rises in Worth; receives new Grace;
As meanest Metals Notice claim,
Imprinted with the Monarch's Face."

It is now, unfortunately, impossible to form an idea of Arthur Onslow's collection of books. The whole collection was moved to the library at Clandon in 1776 by his son, but was dispersed at Sotheby's in 1885. A few of the books were bought in by the fourth Earl and are still at Clandon, but, although the catalogue of the sale may be consulted, one has no clue to the particular volumes that were in the Speaker's library.

A similar dispersal of his pictures makes it equally hard to say which were, and which were not, collected by him. Concerning one of these pictures, an extremely interesting portrait of Milton as a young man, Arthur Onslow has left a remarkable note in manuscript:

> "This original picture of Milton I bought in the year 1728 or '30, and paid twenty guineas for it of Mr. Cumberland, a gentleman of very good consideration in Chester, who was a relation and Executor of the will of Milton's last wife, who died a little while before that time. He told me it hung up in her chamber till her death, and that she used to say her Husband gave it to her to show what he was in his youth—being drawn when he was about twenty-one years of age.—Mr. Hawkins Brown (author of the Poem, De Animi immortalitate) told me (October 8th, 1753) that he knew this Mrs. Milton, visited her often, and well remembered this picture hanging in her chamber, which she said was of her husband."

A copy of this picture was made by Benjamin Van der Gucht, a friend of George Onslow's, in 1782; and it has been assumed that the original was lost, or sold to an unknown buyer. I have found among the MSS. at Clandon a holograph note by Lord Harcourt, written in June 1908, in which he says: "The MSS. at Nuneham record that this copy of Milton's portrait was made for Lord Harcourt by Vandergucht from the original at Clandon and that *the original was subsequently burnt at Clandon.*" Recent (verbal) information seems to imply that the original may still be in existence; and the mystery is therefore unsolved. A charming

print of the picture was made for Arthur Onslow by Houbracken.

Arthur Onslow's great interest in pictures and painters is very strikingly shown in a hitherto unpublished letter from Horace Walpole preserved in the Clandon MSS. It is headed and dated "Strawberryhill. March 31. 1764."

"Sir,

"I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the great trouble you have been so good as to give yourself. I have so slender a title to it, that I cannot help attributing a little of it to your love of and zeal for the arts. This sounds ungratefull: but I do not know how to assume to myself alone the pains you have taken. All I can do, both to pay the debt of the arts & my own, is, to improve my next edition by your communications—at the same time that I must do justice to Vertue, by taking from him to myself many of the faults, at least omissions, that you blame. My fear of making so trifling and uninteresting a work too prolix, prevailed on me to omit many stories that He had collected, especially on the less shining Artists, for I think, Sr, you & I differ in nothing but when you ascribe more merit to our English performers than I do. Some of their paintings & some of their drawings, have & may have a degree of merit, but when compared with the works of really great Masters, I fear We ought not to say much for our Friends.

"Richardson, Thornhill & other Painters, whom, as you observe, Sr, I have omitted, are reserved for the last Volume. The Etchings of the First, some of which I have, I intended to mention in his life there, He being so much more known as a Painter than Engraver; & tho I have now and then mentioned a Person in both capacities, it is but seldom, nor, as I said before, did I care to swell my Volumes too much. I have been reproached already for saying so much on the Artists of this country, for it is not every body, Sr, that has your Candour & Indulgence.

"Among the many curious notices, Sr, which you have sent me, I must particularly thank you for the Anecdotes relating to J. Britton. I have a print of him, & have long wished to know more of Him; for I cannot, like my censors, think it an offence to tell any body what they did not know before . . .

"I do not grudge the pains this Work has cost me, while you, Sr, & a few other curious and good-natured persons are pleased with it. Had I not undertaken it, Vertue's Manuscripts might have perished, & the whole Work remained impracticable. Such as it is, there will

always be men glad of even such a history of the Arts in their own country. They have flourished so little here, that I question whether any man who could perform the Task better, woud have condescended to it. The Assistance of Gentlemen, curious, communicative & able, like you, Sr, may enable me to make the next Edition more worthy of appearing in Public. It is for that Public, Sr, that I beg you to continue your cooperation, &, if you do not think it too much trouble, pray do not apprehend that you can tire me, who reap such benefit from your correspondence & Who am, Sr,

"Yr bounded & much obliged

"humble Sevt

"HorWalpole [*sic*]."

Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting in England* was written in 1761 and published in two volumes in 1762; a third volume, written in 1762, was published in 1764 (clearly the one referred to above); and the final volume, completed in 1771, was not published until 1780.

This letter from Walpole testifies clearly to his respect for the old Speaker and his appreciation of his intelligent interest in the arts. His actual opinion of Onslow varied from time to time. He considered him "gentle and artful"; one who "uttered pompous pathetics couched in short sentences"; though he owns that he was quick and unhesitating when dealing with a situation in the House. But Walpole is inconsistent. After saying of the Speaker that "his disinterestedness was remarkable," he asserts that "popularity was his great aim, impartiality his *professed* means, universal adulation and partiality to whatever was popular, his *real* means of acquiring it. . . He had much devotion from the House, few friends in it, for he was too pompous to be loved, though too ridiculous to be hated; too much dignity in his appearance not to be admired; and was too fond of applause not to miss it."

The opinion of Hervey (*Memoirs*, 1848) is more frankly hostile; but Hervey was a professional hater, to whom the majority were (like himself) shallow, pretentious, vain, deceitful and absurd. He wrote:

"Mr. Onslow had just that degree of fitness for his office, when he was first put into it, that hindered the world from exclaiming against

him, and yet was not enough for him to take it as his due. He was a man naturally eloquent, but rather too florid . . . he had kept bad company of the collegiate kind, by which he had contracted a stiffness and pedantry in his manner of conversing . . . and . . . was totally ignorant of the modern world. No man ever courted popularity more, and to no man popularity was ever more coy; he cajoled both parties and obliged neither. . . . [His] true Whig and laudable principles were so daubed by canting, fulsome, bombast professions, that it was hard to find out whether there was anything good at bottom . . . he was passionate in his temper, coxcombical in his gestures, and injudicious in his conduct."

These estimates of Arthur Onslow cannot be overlooked by anyone who endeavours to write a fair account of him; but they are the estimates of men predisposed to look for all that is ludicrous or deceitful in the human character; seldom willing to observe, and even less willing to praise, what is good and honourable. Their attitudes are typically those of disingenuous intellectualism and of sour disappointment; the icy malice of a wit and the sneering obloquy of a courtier. None the less, they cannot be disregarded: they are the opinions of those who actually saw the Speaker in the House. It is reasonable to assume that Arthur's manner was occasionally pompous and his behaviour sometimes bigoted. That he was fond of popularity may also be true. No more than this, I think, may be conceded to Hervey and Walpole. But even if the fullest implication is accepted, they describe little more than superficial defects of character, by no means incompatible with genuine worthiness and integrity.

To the honour of Walpole, it should be added that his last reference to the Speaker (1768) affirms "the good old man's detestation of Corruption." Onslow had sent a message to the House, telling them that he died in peace after hearing the news of the Bribery Bill.

Few recorded lives have been so entirely satisfying, so near the measure of absolute completeness, and so pleasant in retrospect, as that of the great Speaker. It may be said that a very little honesty, if not the mere avoidance of corruption, was enough to make a man conspicuous in any eighteenth-century Parliament. That is true; but Onslow

was not a great man because of what he refrained from doing; he was great because his virtues were positive, direct and immutable. . . .

The death of Speaker Onslow undoubtedly had a very marked affect upon the conduct of his only son—Black George, the trimmer.

Up to this time the manœuvres of George Onslow had not implied any disloyalty to the Whig party as a whole, but only to his personal patrons. In 1768 the death of Newcastle deprived him of his most effective patron, while the death of his father had removed the wise and salutary influence which modified his activities as a political schemer. He still had the uncertain support of Temple, but he failed to secure the continued attention of Pitt. Thus he found it necessary to assert himself with greater prominence on the winning side. The affair of Wilkes and the Middlesex election now provided him with a first-rate opportunity, though he does not seem to have reckoned with the possibility of retaliation.

His principal difficulty at this time was how to become a King's man without cutting himself off entirely from the orthodox Whigs. He might have to retire—who could say? —to a prepared position. Here his position at the Treasury gave him certain advantages. The Treasury was a citadel from which, after recuperation and rearmament, he might well sally out in a new direction. . . .

Wilkes, defying outlawry, came back to England early in 1768, immediately scattering all the precariously jointed pieces of the new political puzzle and hilariously breaking up the pattern in a jumble of revolt. After wild and rowdy scenes of popular delight he was elected as one of the Members for Middlesex on the 29th of March 1768. Handed over to the Marshal of the King's Bench Prison on the 27th of April, he refused to be rescued by the mob, for he knew very well that imprisonment would make him stronger than ever. On the 8th of June, Mansfield ruled that the outlawry of Wilkes was illegal: but he was tried again on the two previous charges relating to No. 45 of *The North Briton* and the *Essay on Woman*, and again imprisoned.

A letter was sent to George Onslow from his trimming ecclesiastical friend, the Reverend John Butler, on the 12th of June:

> "The Reversal of Wilkes's Outlawry seems to remove one strong Objection to his Seat in the house. . . . It now appears, how precipitate the measure would have been to expel him as an Outlaw. . . . I wish the whole Affair was over. The Public seems rather weary of it, and Government seems not to have gained anything by prosecuting him, as every step taken against him has been more or less exceptionable, and the number of libels does not appear to decrease. Moderation in punishing Party Offences best suits the Genius of our Constitution, and as to Mr. Wilkes's private Meditations, I hope they will not become more public by being recited as part of the punishable matter. I am not his Apologist, but shall be sorry to see anything vindictive in the Proceedings against him for a mere political Misdemeanour committed five years ago, and for which he has suffered ever since."

Butler had been on the friendliest of terms with Jack Wilkes (a very odd companion for a parson) during his militia days. His very sensible letter reflects the opinions of Onslow—his letters invariably reflected these opinions. Both were to change their tune and their trimmings with a beautiful unanimity before long. In the meanwhile it was known that Wilkes had the support of Temple, of the Duke of Portland, and of Parson Horne of Brentford—a high-tempered though formidable and eccentric champion of liberty.

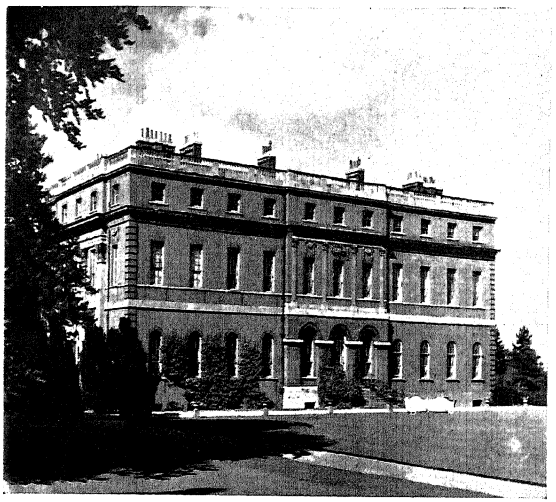
Onslow had been admitted to the Privy Council since December 1767. As a party man he was cooling rapidly, and the new turn of affairs brought about by the Middlesex election in 1768 and the terrifying violence of the Wilkes mob in London evidently made him reflect upon his own position. "God knows what next is to happen," he wrote in what was probably his last letter to Newcastle. When the Grafton Ministry came into office in October 1768, Lord North—prominent among the King's men—was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and was thus brought into close personal contact with George Onslow. In a fragment of autobiography Onslow praises North for his "great Abilities and

manly Courage," giving him the credit of saving the Constitution and of upholding the dignity of Parliament.

I have discovered, in the Speaker's MS. folio at Clandon, a very strange and illuminating note inserted by George Onslow under the heading of "Punishment." It runs, in part, as follows:

> "I heard Lord Camden say publicly aloud in the H of Lords on hearing that the Sheriffs had returned Wilkes, after expulsion, that they ought to have been committed. . . .
>
> "The whole Case merits being well and thoroughly consider'd, & then the Proceedings of the *House of Commons* will be found to be highly justifiable & proper, & the more so considering the dangerous and *Tory* language that was too much talk'd not only in Wilkes's Advertisements to the County of Mddx but in many Companys all over the Kingdom in that mad time. . . . Such a diminution of the reasonable & never disputed Power of the House of Commons, must end in the Encrease of Power in the Crown, & therefore was most wisely withstood by all those who understood and valued *that* part of our Constitution, & were *real Whigs* . . . The Spirit of the Nation as well as of the H of Commons began to rise against these outrageous Acts. . . ."

Surely there was never a more tortuous, a more sublimely inverted argument in the whole annals of trimming. That the language of Radicals could be described as "Tory," while the flat repudiation of constitutional electoral procedure was the correct policy of "real Whigs," thus preventing a dangerous increase in the power of the Crown; all this is a muddled fantasy of such incomprehensible trash that one is at a loss to understand what reason George Onslow could possibly have had for writing it. After all, it was inserted in a folio of procedural notes which few of his family were likely to read; and the question is, what purpose could it have served? Does the trimmer go to the length of an inward mental falsification? Has he lost the sense of objectivity as well as that of honesty? These are questions which I cannot answer. Perhaps one may compare this curious little essay with the retrospective papers composed by Richard the Fox to save his face if things went against him; but these at least were plausible.



(*Photographs: J. W. Lindus Forge, A.R.I.B.A.*)

Clandon Park.

Above: The East Front. *Below:* The South Front.

Wilkes was returned for Middlesex in January, February and March 1769. There were dangerous and bloody riots, and Grafton was justified when he wrote in his autobiography "the internal state of the country was really alarming." In April there was another Middlesex election, and again Wilkes was returned. The figures were decisive: Wilkes, 1143; Luttrell (the Government nominee) 296; and the dummy, Whitaker, 5.

And now the "affectionate friend," the "unalterable friend," the proud and loyal friend, the humble servant and zealous entertainer of "dear John" Wilkes, discovered that the time had come for throwing this "dear old Friend" overboard. In this, the first of his more open treacheries, George Onslow was at least unequivocal. The cat would ultimately jump, he felt sure, towards the King, and now was the proper moment for getting in among the leading jumpers.

Good-bye to Mr. Wilkes and all that! After all, a man is justified in changing his opinions when he has been in the wrong; and it had obviously been wrong to suppose that such an impious and impudent wretch as John Wilkes could be anything but a danger to the country and a foe to everything that was decent and honourable.

Such a position could have been held, at this juncture, without a serious loss of dignity. (The treachery of Grafton was less inexcusable, for he had never committed himself so deeply as the friend of Wilkes.) But Onslow, with all the worst intentions in the world, never possessed the subtlety of an adroit schemer. His tactics were awkward and his manner devoid of conviction. In going over to the side of the King, it was quite unnecessary for him to thrust himself forward as one of the most open and active of all the enemies of Wilkes. An artful trimmer could have made the move with a show of plausibility, and even with grace: he might have won respect and applause, and avoided all doubt and suspicion. Here Onslow failed. He bounced forward when he should have sidled unobtrusively into his place. He raised his voice when tactical requirements demanded silence. He forgot the letters that he had written. . . .

On the 14th of April 1769 he moved on behalf of the Government for the return of a Knight of the Shire for Middlesex. The dignity of the House, he declared with a stilted solemnity, was concerned in putting an end to the Wilkes imbroglio. The people had no right to vote for Wilkes, the Sheriffs had no right to return him; the House was insulted, the constitution was in danger.

There was a good deal of surprise and a good deal of opposition to Mr. Judas Onslow, but the election of Wilkes was declared null and void. Upon this, exhilarated by his own audacity and impudence, Onslow moved that the Sheriffs, those misguided men, should attend the House with the poll. Happily, the Sheriffs had guessed what was afoot, and were careful to be late in arriving at the House: too late for a discussion on the motion. At any rate, the opposition, by no means friendly to George Onslow, made so much disturbance that no debate was possible.

The following day was a Saturday, and again Onslow stood forth. He now moved from the Treasury bench that Luttrell ought to have been returned a Knight of the Shire. The House buzzed and rumbled, tempers were lost, and red anger blazed on the faces of many. Who was this man, this canting Judas, to tell them what was right and wrong?

Undeterred and righteously elated, Mr. Onslow said that Luttrell was *ipso facto* elected, let them say what they pleased. Beckford assailed the Toryism of the Government, and Onslow bawled a furious denial. Charles Fox took the side of Luttrell: Burke supported Wilkes. The most enraged and uncontrolled of all the speakers who attacked Onslow was Grenville, and this frantic spluttering man exerted himself so furiously that he *spat blood*. In this overheated situation the debate went on until three in the morning, when Onslow's motion was carried by a majority of fifty-four.

George Onslow thus made himself unpleasantly and unwisely conspicuous in the attack on Wilkes. It is very odd that a man so incapable of bullish pugnacity, one by nature so reticent, could have thus charged out among the leaders of the line.

This attack upon Wilkes, although supported by a

Parliamentary division, clearly injured the reputation of Onslow in the House of Commons, and also in the county of Surrey. It showed beyond the possibility of doubt that, even in a corrupt administration, Onslow was neither sufficiently able nor sufficiently trusted to be given any office of high responsibility. He may have been indifferent to this, having made up his mind to achieve prominence as a courtier.

However that may be, George Onslow "while in opposition had proved a warm and strenuous supporter of Mr. Wilkes . . . and was now . . . both considered and treated as a deserter from the popular cause" (Stephens, *Memoirs of Horne Tooke*, 1813). He was also disregarding opinion in his own county (Surrey), which had refused to produce a "loyal address" and was one of the petitioning counties which deplored the unholy spectacle of "the representatives of the people in opposition to the people."

Certainly it was unfortunate for Onslow that he had now made himself conspicuous enough to be attacked by the most formidable of opponents: Horne Tooke (then Parson Horne of Brentford), Wilkes himself (indirectly), Woodfall, and all the scandal-mongering anonymous writers in the magazines. He was not of sufficient eminence to be assailed in person by the terrible Junius, who privately dismissed him in a contemptuous phrase as "a false silly fellow" (letter to Woodfall, August 16th, 1769). But Junius, who had begun to publish his celebrated *Letters* in January 1769, was now battering the Grafton Ministry, and Grafton himself, with a ferocity and elegance unsurpassed in the history of political or personal diatribe.

Parson Horne was about thirty-three in 1769.

He is a light and leaping figure who dances blithely, cassock and all, with a frequently changing rhythm, among the more solemn shades of his time. His father sold poultry; one brother was prominent in "the fruit line"; another was "bred a fishmonger," unwisely becoming a poultry-merchant and eventually dying in the alms-house. His four sisters achieved higher social standing: one married a wine-merchant; one married Dr. Demainbray "who formerly occu-

pied an honourable and confidential position about the person of the present king (George IV)"; another married a colourman; and the fourth, "a woman of considerable wit and vivacity," became the wife of a haberdasher in Leicester Fields.

Horne began his education in the "Soho Square Academy," and proceeded thence to Westminster and Eton. He graduated from St. John's, Cambridge, in 1758, and in 1760 obtained the living of Brentford. He was a versatile, vivacious man, an admirable talker, loving cards, company, good food and good wine. On his travels he met Wilkes in Paris, Voltaire at Ferney, Sterne at Lyons. At the time of the Middlesex elections he became the violent partisan of Wilkes, and in 1769 he was victorious in a tussle with the Duke of Bedford over the appointment of bailiffs and a mayor. He was now to be victorious in a more spectacular way.

In July 1769 Horne attacked Onslow by means of a letter in the *Public Advertiser*. He accused him, by implication, of selling for £1000 "in a very common and usual manner" a post at the disposal of the Treasury.

Whether accused rightly or wrongly, it was perhaps unwise of Onslow to reply personally in the same journal; though he made out a tolerably good case for himself and alleged that the whole of this impudent fraud was the work of "a woman of the name of Smith who lives near Broad Street." It was a pity, of course, that the name of this vile defrauder should be such a common one and the place of her abode so extremely ambiguous; and Horne replied shrewdly by asking whether "Mrs. Smith" had been taken into custody. "Depend upon it," said Wilkes, "Mr. Onslow will get nothing but shame by contending with Horne."

This was true, and the shame was to fall even more heavily upon a much more considerable man than Onslow when, in the following year, the case was taken into the courts.

Onslow now found himself (in his own words) treated with "scurrility . . . in the public papers." His friend Butler was nervous: "I am anxious," he wrote, "to hear how you

keep up your spirits, while the Spirits in Agitation against you are more active than ever. . . . I have read a letter by Junius, which made my blood run cold." Later in the year, Butler writes again (Clandon MSS.):

> "A Friend of mine writes full of Horror about the State of things, but I suspect he wishes them to wear a horrible aspect. . . . I am doubtful whether it will answer any purpose to attack Junius. He is a Match for any Writer, and being at present asleep, it seems hardly worth while to awake him. It may be better to reserve him for our Amusement in town."

The first action of Onslow against Horne was heard at Kingston Assizes on the 6th of April 1770. The Judge was Blackstone, and Onslow was non-suited on a small technical point. A more important, indeed a famous, trial took place on the 1st of August at Guildford before no less a person than Mansfield. To the charge of publishing two libels in the *Public Advertiser*, Horne was now faced with the additional charge of having spoken defamatory words in a speech at Epsom. In this speech, Horne was alleged to have said: "I expected to meet George Onslow here. . . . I know him well, I have carried many letters from him to Mr. Wilkes . . . as for instructing him, I would as soon instruct the winds or the waves; and if he will wave his privilege, I will wave my gown."

Asked whether the published form of Horne's first letter to Onslow was correct, Woodfall (the printer of the *Advertiser*) produced laughter in the court by saying that "his men had ignorantly added the word Esquire to Mr. Onslow's name." Legally, the case was difficult. The failure to produce original documents hampered the plaintiff, but the undisputed words of Horne could certainly be construed as libels. The defence was conducted with great brilliance by Sergeant Glynn, and the summing-up was delivered with careless ill-nature by Mansfield. Damages of £400 were awarded to Onslow.

This insignificant victory was turned into a crushing defeat, not only for Onslow but for Mansfield as well. On the 8th of November 1770 a rule was moved for in the Court of Common Pleas to show cause why the verdict

should not be set aside. The arguments presented with scintillating eloquence and forcible reasoning by Sergeant Glynn were heard on the 26th in the presence of twelve judges. They listened imperturbably while Mr. Glynn accused Mansfield of having "delivered a charge in express violation of the received principles of law." Judgment was deferred until the 17th of April 1771, when the judges declared unanimously in favour of Horne.

Such a resounding slap in the face for Mansfield was more sensational than the defeat of Onslow. It was a personal victory for Horne, and a wider victory for Wilkes and the opposition. The loss to Onslow, both in finance and in reputation, was considerable. He had employed the most expensive counsel: the case is said to have cost him £1500; while Horne had spent no more than £200. It is true that Mansfield may be said to have retaliated, some time afterwards, when he fined and imprisoned Horne for expressing sympathy with the rebels in America.

Horne Tooke, after quarrelling on paper with Junius and in person with Wilkes, relapsed into the life of a placid philologist; a Wimbledon host, rightly celebrated for the excellence of his four o'clock dinners, when he entertained such men as Thurlow, Erskine and Camelford. How splendid was the talk! how succulent the dishes! White and brown meats were there in plenty; fish of the more delectable sort with "appropriate sauces"; pies, puddings, "excellent in respect to composition and flavour"; at least three wines; and then—most ravishing of all—high, glossy piles of brightly-coloured fruits, dishes of Alpine strawberries and Antwerp raspberries, pears, apples, the charmaentel, the jargonel, the chrisan, the brown bury. . . .

George Onslow, in spite of his reverse, and in some degree because of it, now attached himself with ostentatious pertinacity to the side of the King and his men. The long and honourable line of Onslow Whiggery was broken and Onslow, most unexpectedly, was the name of a courtier.

Accumulated forces of indignation and rhetoric had swept Grafton out of office—"With what force, my lord," Junius had thundered, "with what protection are you prepared to

meet the united detestation of the people of England?" On the 27th of January 1770 the Government fell: Chatham, Junius, Wilkes and the voice of the people (a harsh unprevaricating voice) had shown the King that he was not infallible. It may be said that Wilkes was the winner. In due time he was released from gaol; he became Lord Mayor of London; he took his place in the House of Commons (1774); and at last, in 1782, he saw the resolutions concerning the Middlesex elections very properly expunged from the Journals of the House.

And yet, in another sense, it was the King, not Wilkes, who had won. The fall of Grafton was almost immediately followed by the rise of North, who was then thirty-eight. In person ungainly, with a face as round as that of a trumpeting cherub, he was so absent-minded that he left letters of the utmost importance, even royal letters, in the water-closet. However, he was dutiful, honourable, kindly and loyal in private life, and himself incorruptible in the midst of corruption. He was, in fact, a trustworthy, upright and unselfish idiot. He cannot be said to have deserved the malicious fury of Junius—"Our language has no term of reproach, the mind has no idea of detestation, which has not already been happily applied to you, and exhausted." This indeed was an overblow of needless virulence; a bomb in the baby's basket.

With North in power, the autocracy of the King was assured, for North believed that obedience to his royal master was a sacred and immutable duty.

CHAPTER XIII

A Trimmer's Progress

ON the 10th of December 1770, when there was a horrible tumult in the House of Lords and the Commons were expelled by force—Chatham "roaring in vain and unregarded"—Horace Walpole noticed the behaviour of George Onslow and described him as "a noisy indiscreet man . . . whose connexions should not have led him to encourage the opponents in setting the two Houses at variance."

The "noisy indiscreet man" was now launched, with no great velocity and a perceptibly nibbled reputation, upon the hazardous voyage of a courtier. He had, one must allow, a great deal of the necessary equipment. He had, for example, a well-disciplined conscience and a wonderful way of making the crooked appear straight—even to himself. A mere shifting of ballast is nothing, a simple adjustment of opinion is often required by circumstances. And although he betrayed or rejected all those principles which had given his family an honourable name, he did not wholly discard a tattered residue, a figment or pretence, to which he could apply the term "Whiggism." But he did not feel safe until, some twelve or fifteen years later, he had secured a line of retreat through Carlton House; when he was in the trimmer's ideal position of serving and betraying his master at the same time; not having to wait for the jumping of the one cat or the other, King or Prince, but having both cats in his lap.

So the King could be sure of finding George Onslow's name on the "right" side of the division lists; the lists which he scanned so regularly and read with alternations of malignity and approval, devising therefrom a simple system of reward and revenge, and marking off with pernicious exactitude the sheep of the royal party and the goats of the opposition.

Another George Onslow, a red, rolling, preposterous, fiery little creature, not unknown to the careful student of English history, stamps and rants on the scene in 1771. He was, in ludicrous perfection, the ribald, irascible, jocular, Tory-glory comic English colonel, the cousin of George Onslow the trimmer.

His passion was cock-fighting; a sport, let it be remembered, that was eminently aristocratic, patronised enthusiastically by many of our Kings, from Henry VIII to George IV; indeed, there were "gentlemen cockers" up to 1830 and even later, though cock-fighting was made illegal in 1849. It was one of those sports in which, as in racing or boxing, the Peers and the People could meet with equal enjoyment after "paying their tip for admission." Much money was lost and won upon a "main" of cocks, and the bloody battles were often continued until there was only one survivor. The treatment of a surviving bird seems to have been as inelegant as ineffective—"Search and suck your cock's wounds, and wash them well with hot urine." The neighbouring family of the Kings at Ockham were equally devoted to this pastime, and matches were fought at the Royal Cockpit, Westminster, between the Kings and the Onslows, one of which consisted of thiry-four battles.

As a "cocking gentleman" the name of Colonel Onslow is preserved in the noble annals of British sport, but he is remembered more importantly in political history as the leader of the attack on the general licence of printers, and especially on those who misrepresented the speeches made in the House of Commons, in 1771.

Up to this time he had been a really progressive and audacious Whig. Like his cousin, he admired Wilkes: going far beyond mere admiration, he declared that No. 45 of *The North Briton* was not a libel, and actually voted against the expulsion of Wilkes from the House of Commons. When Wilkes was wounded in his duel with Martin, the Colonel wrote to him in terms even friendlier than those of his cousin George. The "regard and honour" which he felt for Wilkes could only be exceeded by the "contempt and abhorrence" he bestowed upon the "most detestable Ministry." But

although he played up to Newcastle, he once wrote a very saucy letter to his Grace, who sent it off to cousin George in a fury: "I send you a most Extraordinary and Impertinent Letter . . . from your cousin George Onslow. You can easily see, I can make no Reply to it . . . I leave it to you—." With all his irascibility, the Colonel (he had retired from the army in 1760) was good-humoured and amusing, and enjoyed his own buffoonery as much as anyone else. Not infrequently he "diverted the House" with an appropriate or conciliatory joke; and when he turned his coat, which he certainly did when he deserted Rockingham and attached himself to Grafton, he did so without any scheme of personal advantage. Although Horace Walpole says that he "followed the banners of the Court," and although (in 1768) he seized a man who was "pasting up a speech of Oliver Cromwell," he was no place-hunter.

He was rough, he was rude; and a Guildford election ballad—"To the Tune of the Tanner, Sung by Mr. Doyle in the Magic Cavern"—may perhaps illustrate his public style:

> "That *famed Cocking George*, he is quite in a Fuss,
> And has flown here so quickly to get the first Buss;
> With *this Cocking George*, to drink, lie, and swear,
> Friend Pawling will tell you no Man can *compare*."

In the action of 1771 against the printers, Colonel Onslow was the leader—or at least his cousin made him appear so. For this he was attacked as "a paltry malignant insect." His cousin was assailed more ferociously in the papers, as will presently be shown. Although the King advised caution, the House ordered the printers (who had refused to attend the Bar) to be taken into custody; but the Sergeant was "unable to execute the order"—Brass Crosby, the Lord Mayor, Wilkes and Alderman Oliver defied the King and the House of Commons. On the 12th of March, Colonel Onslow brought in a new motion against six other printers. Opinion in the House was not unanimous, there were twenty-three divisions, and the debate was prolonged until four in the morning.

Crosby and Oliver were taken to the Tower (it was considered wise to leave Wilkes alone), where they received

numerous and important visitors. A hard apple was thrown into the King's coach, and little Cocking George, the Colonel, was hanged in effigy. The Princess Dowager and the Earl of Bute (in effigies of a peculiarly offensive nature) were beheaded by chimney-sweeps and roasted in a bonfire. On the 8th of May the Mayor and the Alderman were released, the Artillery Company fired a salute of twenty-one guns, London was twinkling with gay illuminations, and the windows of the Speaker's house were smashed to pieces. The battle of the printers was nearly won.

Colonel Onslow was now as violently opposed to Wilkes as he had once been warm in supporting him: his biographer, the fifth Earl of Onslow, says that "his hatred of Wilkes became almost a ruling passion." After Wilkes had taken his seat in the House of Commons (1774), it was Onslow who most vehemently opposed his motion (1775) for expunging the Resolutions of 1769 from the Journals of the House.

The rest of Colonel Onslow's career may be summarised very briefly. As he grew older, he became louder but less amusing. He supported North and agreed with Johnson about the rebels in America, whom he would have hanged or shot as long as a rope or a bullet remained. If we had to retire, we should retire fighting. He was called to order "seven or eight times" in the course of "an extraordinary speech" which he delivered in February 1780 against the proposals for economic reform. It is more to his credit that he defended North against the attack of Thomas Pitt in 1783. He spoke in the House for the last time on the 22nd of March 1784, when, in a characteristic tirade, he declared —as he had done so often—that we should be well advised to get rid of Gibraltar. Having retired, he lived at Dunsborough near Ripley, still active as a Justice of the Peace and a cock-fighter. He died in 1792 after an accident in which he was involved while returning from the Bench in Guildford. His wife was Jane Thorpe (not an heiress), daughter of the Reverend Thomas Thorpe of Chillingham in Northumberland. From this marriage there issued a covey of clergymen.

The following estimate of little Cocking George was written by the fifth Earl of Onslow (Clandon MSS.): "He

is a very attractive character. Perfectly straight and honest . . . perhaps coarse in his tastes and language, but he was virile in both . . . a fine specimen of the arrogant but good-natured aristocracy of the eighteenth century, with a high sense of duty, but a duty owed to his Country, to his profession and to his class, not to his countrymen and still less to mankind in general." Very attractive, if you like such people; though scarcely very intelligent.

George Onslow of the Treasury had brought upon himself the full torrent of popular hostility after his treachery to Wilkes, his wretched action against Horne, and his persecution of the printers. In April 1771 the most venomously scurrilous of personal attacks appeared in the *Town and Country Magazine*.

Onslow was there represented as "*a whisling, wou'd-be statesman*," who, though deterred by North and asked to withdraw his motion by the Speaker, insisted upon the punishment of the printers. He was unable to write "a *common* letter in *common* English" (which was certainly true). His private morals were shocking. He had "appeared in an open state of *intimacy* with . . . a girl of low extraction who had passed through almost every stage of prostitution," while treating his wife with brutality and refusing to give her the money necessary for housekeeping. "By G—d," he is alleged to have shouted, "the woman's mad, I could no more raise five guineas than I could raise the dead,"—while hundreds of pounds were available for Miss Lucy. But Lucy died, and then came a Miss Power ("a vivacious, pretty girl"); a little too sharp for George; who said she would "like *vastly* to be a *maid of honour*." This came to the ears of Grafton, who laughed rudely: "Egad, George, you had better get her upon the list of *necessary women*; it will be more in character." After this came a Miss Evans, who was "under the disagreeable necessity of seeing a variety of visitors, of all ages, statures and complexions; and their persons were not less different than their amorous whims and caprices."

It is always difficult to assess the degree of truth, if there is any, in scurrilities of this description, which were exceedingly common in the eighteenth century. They were a

feature of contemporary journalism from which no one, not even so respectable a figure as Johnson, was immune. But in one matter—the charge of not being able to write a common letter in common English—the assailant was justified. Of this I am able to give an amusing illustration from the Butler MSS.

Towards the end of 1772 George Onslow was under the impression that—heaven knows why—he was on the point of being raised to the Peerage. Did he expect a royal reward for his action against Wilkes and the printers? Were there flattering rumours, or signs of marked approval? At any rate he wrote to Butler and asked him for a speech or address which he could read to his constituents in Surrey. Himself not unhopeful, Butler replies at once (Clandon MSS.):

> "I have obeyed your commands, and send you herewith a few periods, which I think will express your meaning . . . depend upon my not being either Fool or Scoundrel enough to claim what you subscribe as mine. I am clearly against confessing, *that you solicited the thing* in order to get rid of *them*." (The first italics, only, are mine.)

Here follows the sadly premature address to the electors:

> "Gentlemen: Having this day accepted of His Majesty's most gracious intention to call me to the House of Peers, I take the earliest opportunity of informing you of it & of returning you my hearty thanks for the great honor I have enjoyed . . . of representing you in the House of Commons. . . . I have had the misfortune indeed of differing from some in a Case, in which I acted up to my hereditary zeal for the power of the House of Commons. . . . I wish you success in the Election of a more able Representative. . . ."

This charming little exercise in prematurity, the trimmer untrimmed, as it were, displays the hopes and the incurable fatuity of Onslow; both of them shared, perhaps, by the Reverend John Butler.

Earlier in the same year (1772) Onslow had supported a motion for the relief of Protestant Dissenters, and his friend the Reverend John had published a pamphlet on the same theme. But the trimmer was becoming less concerned with political debates. His reputation in Surrey, where progressive policies were still congenial, was perceptibly reduced. The

interest of Onslow was veering in a manner too obvious from Westminster to St. James's, and his constituents had no wish to be represented by a courtier, one who now upheld the ruinous and reactionary measures of the King. In August 1773 he was cautioned in a friendly, though by no means disinterested, way by John Butler (Clandon MSS.):

> Butler is uncertain whether his Lordship at Clandon still drags on his obstructive life or whether he has "left a Gap in the Creation by slipping out of it." He proceeds to give some good advice about the representation of the County: "—do nothing hastily with respect to the County, in case it should please God to deprive us of you as our Representative. Much will depend upon your setting out in a new Character. . . . I must beg that you would be cautious in the manner of taking leave of your constituents. You may remember, we thought of a form last winter. . . . The dirt which has been thrown upon your Character is dropping off every day . . . avoid everything that may give the same enemies some handle to pelt again . . . you know my zeal for you—."

The zeal of Butler for Onslow was doubtless equalled by the zeal of Butler for Butler. What is of significance here is the plain indication that Onslow had made up his mind to shake off his duties as a local representative, before he himself might be shaken off by the electors. He had not been unaffected by the "dirt" which had been "thrown upon his character," and his timidity, as well as his anticipated advancement, made a withdrawal preferable to the disgrace of rejection.

At the general election of 1774 George Onslow did not stand. The borough of Guildford was still represented by his cousin, the Colonel. His wisdom in withdrawing to the citadel of the Treasury is evident. The activities of Horne, and of other less notable enemies, would have made his return for the county extremely problematical, and a reverse in the provincial field would have bruised his pride and injured his prospects very considerably.

Then, in October 1776, came the welcome death of Lord Onslow of Clandon; great expectations were realised, while even greater expectations loomed in the golden distance; and George Onslow, now Lord Onslow and Cranley, Lord

Lieutenant of Surrey and High Steward of Guildford, rushed into his estate. (He had been created Baron Cranley in the May of this year.)

Splendours unimaginable were now contemplated. The elderly Capability Brown was quickly summoned to Clandon Park, a man who was now "supporting with dignity the station of a country gentleman" and was High Sheriff for Huntingdonshire. To him we owe the lovely group of trees to the south of the house, the pleasant irregularity of the lake, so agreeably simulating an emergent river, the stables of Temple Court, and the twin lodges at the Merrow entrance to the drive.

This was only a beginning. The evidence all shows that Onslow threw himself with a feverish disregard of cost and a wild enthusiasm for display into the improvement and aggrandisement of his property. This he did with a nervous flurry of excitement which threatened to injure his health. The obsequious John Butler declared in a letter to Onslow that he would be "transported with joy" to see him at Clandon, "providing for the Comforts, Conveniences and Magnificence" of the rest of his life (October 1776). He was glad to hear that the previous Lady Onslow had "quitted her hold" and was "rather curious to hear the particulars, having a clear Idea of her Conduct, without inquiring into facts." But a little later he wrote with some anxiety (Clandon MSS.):

> "I left you last Monday with a real concern for your health. I am afraid the infinite confusions you are in will prove more than you can bear. Is it not of more consequence, that you should be well, and live long, than that Clandon should be in complete order before Christmas, or that every thing about the Park should be in its right place? I really thought, my Lord, that you looked pale and worn, and am firmly of opinion, that one week's peace would do as much for you as Bath and Spa do for other men. I was confirmed in this opinion by the observations of John Knight. . . . He thinks you have a great deal too much upon your mind. . . ."

Not only did Onslow busy himself about the house and the park; he villainously took pieces of stained glass, bearing the family arms, out of Cranleigh church, and put them into

the church at West Clandon. He flung out his money here, there and everywhere with a heedless prodigality that led him towards the precipice of ruin. In this way, at least, he was able to force himself upon the notice of the world. Mrs. Delany wrote to her sister, Mrs. Port of Ilam, in January 1778 (*Correspondence*, 1861-62):

> "Lord Onslow who was thought rich (and his lady had no reasons to think otherwise) is now declared to be an hundred thousand pound in debt, and they feel so little shame, so little sensible of their folly and dishonesty, that they appear in the midst of all the numerous assemblies and spectacles as gay and as fine as ever."

The phase of impetuous extravagance came to an end, and a less enjoyable phase of selling properties took its place. In 1780 the Manor of Esher was disposed of; and Ember Court and the Manor of Thames Ditton went the same way. Other sales followed.

Still there were great pleasures in the life of a country gentleman. Here, from the Clandon MSS., is a letter which he wrote to a gentleman poacher in 1778:

> "Sir,—I was some time ago inform'd that you had frequently coursed & even shot Hares on the Downs close to my Warren & Park, but taking it for granted that you would not persevere in a Practice which none of my Neighbours thought of, knowing that I wish'd to preserve the Hares so close to my own House, I was unwilling to think it necessary to desire the same attention from you. But hearing today that you have even this week destroy'd several, I cannot help feeling it somewhat hard that an advantage which I have hitherto (for the sake of giving the Hares strength) denied myself & my family should be taken by you. . . . I do recollect your speaking to me on the Subject last year, & my saying you was welcome, as far as I had any Power, on any of my Manors, to amuse yourself when in the Country; & Such a general Indulgence I should never think of refusing you or any body; but when I granted it, I certainly had it not in contemplation that your Request extended to every place, nor could I suppose that it was to interfere so much with my own immediate Sport, of which I have never had any Objection to every body's partaking with me, when I was out. But if what I hear be true of your Success this Year I shall not be likely to have the same Entertainment I have been used to have, or to entertain any body else."

In the House of Lords, Onslow was never prominent as a debater. When he spoke, it was not on matters of national importance, but rather as a courtier desirous of pleasing the King. Thus, in 1777 he advocated a plan for discharging the royal debts (that is, for refunding the cash expended in bribery) and "launched into encomiums of the personal and political virtues of the Sovereign"; and in 1778 he voted against the attendance of the Lords at the funeral of the Earl of Chatham—a touch of petty malice and of ignoble complaisance that was, of course, gratifying to the King, who had made it known that a public memorial to Chatham would be "an offensive measure to me personally." This was particularly disgusting in view of Onslow's fulsome advances to Chatham some years previously.

George Onslow, in his little way, obtained his little reward. He was, in succession, Comptroller of the Household, and Treasurer, resigning the last appointment in 1780 when he became a Lord of the Bedchamber.

Of the disasters which now fell upon the country there is no need to speak in detail here—they did not affect the private schemes of George Onslow. The King's political influence was rapidly declining, and while England feared a French invasion the Americans were fighting victoriously for independence. On the 16th of April 1780 the husky voice of Mr. Dunning in the House of Commons produced a startling motion against the increasing influence of the Crown; a motion that was carried with a majority of eighteen against the Government. In June the Gordon riots flamed and roared in London, and a wild orgy of liquor, fire and loot was only quelled at last by platoons of grenadiers. In the following year (1781) the defeat of Cornwallis at Yorktown ended the American war, and the unhappy North, flinging out his arms in a gesture of despair, cried out "Oh God!—it is all over!"

Not only was the war lost: the King's political reputation was lost also: his experiment in absolute monarchy had ended in the greatest, the costliest and the most degrading of our national disasters. Parliament, under North, had ceased to be a representative assembly, and the safety of the

country was in the gravest peril until the Ministry of Pitt came to power in 1783.

In 1781 the two surviving sons of George Onslow, Tom and Edward, were twenty-seven and twenty-three respectively. The first had been the Member for Rye since 1775, and the second was the Member for Aldeburgh.

Young Tom, a ribald, rhyming fellow, lived with his father at Clandon; and so did Edward—but Edward became involved in a very disquieting scandal; he had to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds and fly to France, where he established what was known as the "French branch" of the family.

Both brothers, more especially Tom, will be discussed in later chapters. Here it is only necessary to note their existence. Tom is of much importance in the family record, but of no importance whatever in general history; while Ned Onslow is a curiously aberrant individual, romantic, perverted, sensitive and by no means uninteresting.

Already fifty, well advanced, though not highly respected, among the King's men, George Onslow had not yet attained the full height of his ambition: he was looking forward to nobler rewards, more splendid honours. As a means to this end, and with an eye to contingencies and opportunities, he was now making hopeful and successful advances to the Prince of Wales.

This entirely reprehensible though captivating youth came of age in 1783 and established himself in Carlton House; thus escaping with delight from the "palace of piety," the humiliating restrictions and embarrassing dullness of his father. His behaviour became outrageous. Much of his time was devoted to the pursuit of selected females—of any rank or no rank at all. He called his own sister, the Princess Royal, "that bandy-legged bitch"; he drank himself into complete insensibility with his uncle Cumberland; he went about, in disguise, to the resorts of infamy; he brawled in the gardens at Ranelagh, causing the worst of scandals; he whipped his way to Brighton, driving three horses—and rudely refused his father's kindly though not exciting offer to play a game of chess. He sang, he played

the 'cello, he had a taste for the arts. When my respectable ancestor, Mr. Papendiek, played his flute at the Prince's musical parties, he felt himself obliged to protest when there was "much disorder," because he attended personally on the Queen and the Princesses. Whereupon the royal rake shouted hilariously, "I'm glad the Queen has an honest man in her service; and when I'm King—why, damme, Papendiek! you shall be my Sergeant Trumpeter."

There is no doubt whatever that Onslow had confided his hopes to his friend John Butler, who was now Bishop of Oxford. Writing in November 1784 the Bishop observes: "The circumstances you mention of a strong mark of favor from the P. is very important to the object you have naturally at heart. I wish success to that & every other means that may contribute to so desirable an end." He refers to "difficulties" that will have to be overcome.

The Bishop's allusion to "a strong mark of favor" possibly refers to the Prince's visits to Clandon, or to his friendship with Tom Onslow, whose company he found (for a while) congenial and amusing.

But George Onslow was concerned in a matter of the utmost importance to Prinny—his marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert. That he should have been concerned in this affair reveals the fullest extent of his treachery and the degree of intimacy which existed between himself and the Prince.

The story—though not Onslow's part in it—is well known. In the summer of 1784 the Prince fell in love (a totally new experience for the methodical sensualist) with Mrs. Fitzherbert, a beautiful and respectable widow. Finding that he had many scruples to overcome, he resolved upon a theatrical stratagem: Mrs. Fitzherbert was to be conveyed to Carlton House, where she would find him self-wounded and almost literally dying for love. This appalling spectacle, and the realisation that she alone was the remedy, would be likely enough to obtain a surrender.

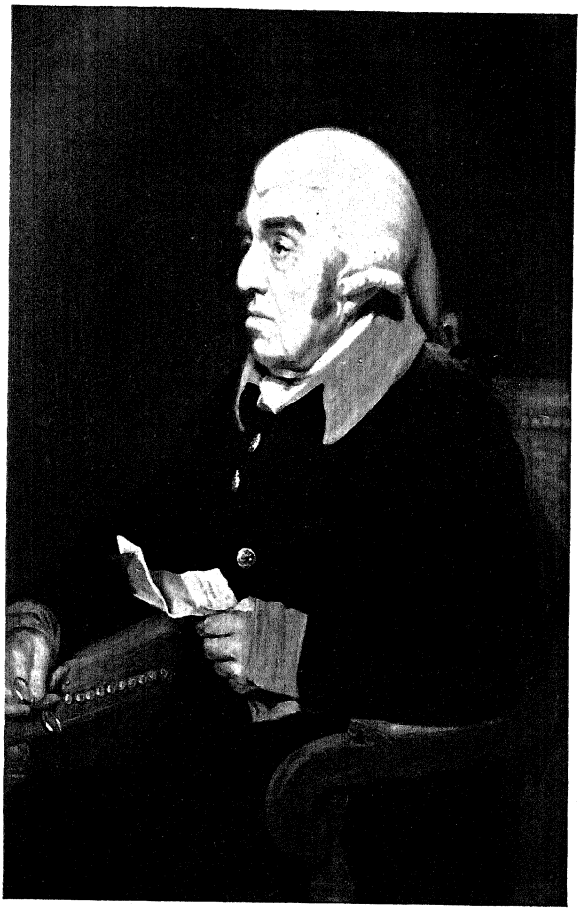
A deputation was therefore sent from Carlton House to Mrs. Fitzherbert. It consisted of Dr. Keith (a surgeon), Lord Onslow, Lord Southampton and Mr. Edward Bouverie. Mrs. Fitzherbert, accompanied by the Duchess of

Devonshire and the entire deputation, went to Carlton House, where she was overcome by the sight of the almost expiring Prinny, and some sort of deposition was drawn up and signed by all present. On the following day Mrs. Fitzherbert left the country and remained abroad for more than a year. When she returned it was understood that she had agreed to marry the Prince. As the Prince was not yet twenty-five it was impossible for him to marry under the terms of the Royal Marriage Act without the consent of the King: that is to say, he could not marry at all, for no such consent was possible. On the 1st of December 1785 he was "united" to Maria Fitzherbert (a Catholic) by "a Protestant clergyman." Her uncle and brother were the witnesses, and all the members of the original Carlton House deputation were present.

It is necessary here to stress the peculiarly base conduct of Onslow in this transaction. He had helped the son to accomplish an infamy which caused the most agonising distress to the father. His position as a Lord of the Bedchamber to the King made his conduct even more execrable. To serve his own purpose he had been guilty of a double treachery, a culmination of the trimming practice for which no term of opprobrium could be too severe. Even among courtiers, even among those habitually practised in the snaky ways of intrigue, this conduct was intensely shocking. It was never made known to the betrayed Sovereign, whose confidence in Onslow was unimpaired.

At Clandon, up to 1781 (when Edward Onslow had to leave so precipitately) the family lived in harmony, and it seems clear that George Onslow, however unscrupulous in pursuing his personal ambition, was at least a tolerable father. There is evidence to show that he was liked by his two sons. For example, there are the rollicking letters in rhyme (Clandon MSS.) which Tom wrote from Clandon to his father when Lord Onslow was at Bath:

"From the Library fire (where no Virtues we boast
But abusing our friends, while our arses we roast;
Where we laugh at your absence; and think with concern
That eleven days more may complete your return;



(*Photograph : A. C. Cooper Ltd.*)

George, First Earl of Onslow (1731-1814). By Thomas Stewardson. From the picture in the possession of the Earl of Onslow.

Where we murder our time, as the fancy shall suit,
In polite conversation and decent dispute;
That's to say that He only has claim to the Laurel,
Who can swear the most oaths in the course of the Quarrel),
To the realms of King Bladud, whose whimsical son
Gave a tun of Bath Waters by way of good fun,
I write. . . .
Mrs. Onslow but yesterday sent you a letter
To say that we spent our time better and better:
A position, my friend, which I own by the bye,
Not to mince matters much, was a damnable lie. . . .
Cloacina invites me, and while my guts grumble,
Believe me to be, Your affectionate humble—."

Ribald, if you like, but certainly indicating a most friendly relation between George Onslow and his son. Another rhyming letter, also of the same period (not later than 1781) and written in the same circumstances, contains a jocose description of his brother Ned, who was at Bath with Lord Onslow. Tom's name for his brother was "great Garbage," and he showed a like propensity for juvenile rudeness in finding names for everyone he knew. Of Garbage he draws a lengthy portrait, which, for more than one reason, I have curtailed:

"What a fat ars'd Alexis; so gay and so able,
Yet so awkward he throws down tea, partner and table.
When he hands about Coffee, I really cou'd wish
He'd prevail on his sleeve not to drink half the dish:
And believe me, there's ne'er a coquette or a flirt,
But prefers simple sugar and cream to his shirt. . . .
So Garbage may sigh himself thin as a lath,
Tho' they tell me he looks most delectably fat in
His velveret Coat and his breeches of satin:
In the which he's so fine at the ball and assembly,
When he pours out their tea, and he dances so nimbly,
That the girls all observe 'he can't fail to delight us,
Such an elegant motion he has of St. Vitus' . . .
Miss Lovet declares when first Garbage survey'd her,
So deck'd out from his Zenith quite down to his Nadir. . . .
With an arse like an Ox, yet she ne'er clapp'd her eyes on
One who shook it so parallel to its horizon—."

Events were now tending (from his own point of view) to justify the withdrawal of George Onslow from the murky turmoil of politics to the more private and less perilous manœuvres of a well-placed courtier. The second Rockingham Ministry, the Shelburne Ministry and the unscrupulous Fox-North Coalition followed each other between 1782 and 1783.

Although the Whigs were still numerically as well as morally and intellectually superior to the Tory party, they were still disunited. None the less, they began to sweep the grosser, more stinking forms of corruption out of the House. A series of measures were introduced which effectively diminished the autocratic powers of the Crown and put a stop to the monstrous practices of bribery which for so long had reduced or seduced English politics to a mere system of jobbery, and of place by purchase.

The King employed for a time the most dishonourable, the stupidest of methods in a last endeavour to re-establish himself, his party and his policy. He broke the Coalition, unscrupulous as it was, by an even more unscrupulous piece of trickery: he circulated a note in the House of Lords declaring that any peers who voted in favour of Fox's India Bill would be considered by him as his own personal enemies. The Bill was thrown out. But the King, in defeating the Fox-North Coalition, had defeated himself. If Pitt may be said to have introduced a phase of "constructive Toryism," he did so at the expense of the "King's Friends" as well as of the old Whigs. The King was now politically extinct and his party disbanded for ever. The Commons were resolved, whatever their presiding faction, that no British monarch should ever again control their debates.

How fortunate for Onslow that he was no longer at the mercy of the jumping cats! How fortunate that he was now equally in favour with a crazy King and a rollicking Prince! Whatever happened, he was on the road to honours—though not to honour.

CHAPTER XIV

Parson to Patron

I HAVE already quoted some of the letters written by John Butler to his friend and patron, George Onslow. The large collection of these letters preserved in the Clandon archives made it clear to me that Butler was a character well worthy of attention in his own right.

The published material relating to this ecclesiastical place-hunter is neither plentiful nor easily discovered; the letters not only illustrate the machinations and extremely varied qualities of Butler himself, but they also form one of the most diverting of all possible commentaries upon the most important years of George Onslow's life (1766-1801); and I have thought it well worth while to devote one chapter to the Bishop and his letters. (Moreover, I think it may be said that these letters are essential documents for the history of the Onslow family.)

It will be seen that Butler, though possibly a rogue, was a rogue of strangely insinuating charm, frequently witty, sometimes unreservedly cordial, and in old age demanding (not in vain) a sentiment of respect that will even border upon affection. Sleek and subtle though he was, charlatan as he may have been, there is a basic humour in the man which counters our distaste for his obvious trimming or toadying. In some ways he anticipates a character from Trollope, some Barchester blackguard; but, as he is a real man, he is not consistently villainous; and he is perfectly frank (unlike Onslow) in showing his cards.

John Butler was born at Hamburg in 1717. There is no record of his education, and he was never, so far as we know, at any University. In later life he received the degree of LL.D. from Cambridge, which does not seem to have involved very much difficulty for anyone. His youth is obscure.

He was at one time secretary to Bilson Legge, Chancellor of the Exchequer, of whom (according to Woodfall) he wrote and published *Some Account*. He was also tutor in the family of a banker, Mr. Young. His first wife is described as "a lady who kept a school at Westminster," and it is obvious that Butler was at that time an inconspicuous young man of low social standing. But his second wife was the sister and co-heiress of Sir Charles Vernon of Farnham.

Butler seems now, in his later thirties, to have made his way with astonishing rapidity. He was described by those who knew him as "a man of mild disposition," but he evidently possessed the gift of eloquence and at least some of the advantages of a charlatan with a capacity for intrigue and a lack of squeamishness. He took Orders (or professed to have taken Orders), and his preaching drew large congregations in London. In 1754 ,when he was thirty-seven, he published a sermon which he had preached in St. Paul's to the Sons of the Clergy, describing himself on the title-page as "Chaplain to the Princess Dowager of Wales." This appointment was again cited in 1758 when another sermon was published, and he was "Minister of Great Yarmouth." His advance was maintained, and in 1760 he was Prebendary of Winchester.

From this time, with a rapturous flexibility, Butler sprang here and there within the domain of politics. In 1762 he published a smart little squib on *The Cocoa Tree*, signed "A Whig," in which he fell upon Bute and his Ministry: a change indeed from the days when he was chaplain to the Princess Dowager, The same exhilarating flexibility led him towards private encounters of a most surprising nature. When the Bucks Militia were quartered at Winchester he made the acquaintance of Colonel John Wilkes, and the acquaintance developed into a cordial friendship.

This friendship was one of the causes which produced the untenable theory that Butler wrote the Letters of Junius. In Woodfall's 1814 edition of the Letters there is a remarkable communication from a friend of the Bishop's to "a high official character." He says: "Mr. Wilkes had been intimate with Bishop Butler . . . and from some very curious concurrent circumstances, he (Wilkes) had strong reasons for

considering that the Bishop was the author, and I had some reasons for conjecturing the same. Yet I must confess . . . I think I should require more substantial proofs."

Butler himself was well aware of these absurd imputations, and he referred to them in his letters to George Onslow. In October 1769 he wrote:

> "I almost forgot to tell you that Mrs. Aislabie wrote to her Sister to know, whether I am the Author of Junius, some Gentlemen having affirmed it very confidently. . . . I do not like this Compliment to my Abilities at the Expense of my Morals. My friends know better, but as the Report is strongly propagated in Yorkshire, I suspect it comes from Persons, who wish to mislead the Scent from the real Author. . . . However . . . the Suspicion may screen me from other Suspicions, which might not be so confidently denied."

What these "other suspicions" may happen to be, in view of Butler's complicated and subtle manœuvres, is not easily decided. But the rumours persisted, and on the 26th of December of this year (1769) he is even more seriously perplexed and annoyed. He accuses Junius of going beyond the limits of seditious libel and of summoning people to "the rebel standard." And he is particularly indignant that people of sound views and of correct judgment should "admire the language" of this detestable rogue. There follows a remarkable passage:

> "I am fully of opinion with a noble friend of yours, that if Junius were analysed, he would be found to be rather insignificant. I am provoked to say so much of him by a letter I had from a friend last week, who tells me, that a noble Earl, who has been Secretary of State, declares no Man in England to be capable of it but your humble Servant. As the Earl probably knows the Author, I am sure my name is made use of to mislead the scent after him. I am enraged at this, tho' it cannot hurt me, as my most valuable friends know my innocence and know full well the size of my abilities. But tho' I confess the fellow very superior to me, I cannot bear to pass for such an Assassin. I hope you will find him out a fortnight hence, and lay hands upon him and all the printers."

It may be assumed that "the noble Earl who had been Secretary of State" was Grenville; though how it came about that anyone could have seriously imagined that Butler

was the author of those terrible Letters is almost as much of a mystery as that of the hidden author himself. Nor can it be explained how the style of Butler, who had only published a few very ordinary political tracts and a sermon or two, could have been so well known and so highly rated; or how so demure and inconspicuous a churchman could have been suspected of such perilous audacity. These incredible suspicions must have been extremely distasteful to Onslow as well, who was known to be the friend of Butler, and they probably added a quantum of heat and resolution to his own attack upon Wilkes and the printers.

In any case, it should have been sufficiently clear that Butler did not possess as a writer the sturdy thump and rattle, the startling chromatic virtuosity of the Junian style.

That Wilkes, of all men, should have given countenance to this absurd theory is indeed astonishing, and Butler himself was justly annoyed. His mere denials and his attitude of shocked respectability would not in themselves have proved anything, coming as they did from a man to whom duplicity was a familiar device. But in this instance, whether he was genuinely annoyed or not, the denials were sincere.

Although the earliest of Butler's letters to Onslow in the Clandon collection are dated 1766, when Butler was forty-nine and his patron a mere thirty-five, it is impossible to say when their association began, and the serene place-hunting frankness of the first of these collected letters (already quoted) would indicate that the friendship existed from a much earlier period. Butler was living at Farnham for many years, and his approach to George Onslow was almost certainly by way of Clandon, where he visited, and disliked, the third Baron Onslow.

In due course Butler was appointed chaplain to Hayter, Bishop of London, at some date prior to 1762. And here it is necessary to quote at length an anonymous letter sent in a disguised hand to Grenville (then the chief Minister) in May 1764 and printed in the *Grenville Papers* in 1852:

"Sir,—His Majesty having determined to give the Bishopric of London to Dr. Terrick, a man in himself most unexceptionable, it is hoped by those who regard his Majesty's honour, that care will

be taken to prevent the Bishop's taking into his patronage Dr. Butler, a particular friend of the infamous Wilkes, with whom he lived in the closest connexion two summers at Winchester, whilst he was engaged in the *North Briton*. It is feared the Bishop may make him his Chaplain, or show distinguished marks of his favour to this man, from his intimacy with him in Bishop Hayter's time; to whom he was a tool, and had a great hand in blowing the flame betwixt the said Bishop and Lord Harcourt on one side, and those on the other side, in the family at Leicester House, where he acted as Hayter's spy; and has since distinguished himself by writing two pamphlets against the present Ministry; who has often vindicated in conversation that infamous *North Briton*, No. 45; who at first shammed *Orders*; then was preferred, when he got real *Orders*, by Sir J. Astley, a true Blue, and who is now acting the part of a Whig, so he calls himself; but he is much nearer to the character of a Jesuit."

Bishop Hayter (1702-62) was at one time, after the death of Frederick, Prince of Wales, preceptor in the Princess Dowager's household to the youthful George. He would thus have been brought into contact with Butler, who had the status of a chaplain in the same household.

Assuming that the substance of this anonymous warning is true, as it appears to be, we have here the portrait of a double-dealer so varied and so unpredictable in posture that he seems to have no central policy apart from that of temporary interest. His friendship with Onslow is thus explicable on grounds of affinity: the veerings of Onslow corresponded exactly with Butler's own shiftings, and the cynical frankness of the Jesuitical parson must have been well matched by the trimmings and the treacheries of his patron. It was admittedly through Onslow's direct influence that Butler was made one of the King's chaplains, and afterwards (in 1769) Archdeacon of Surrey.

You may, if you please, describe the parson and his patron as two rogues, though so harsh a term does injustice to their confederated subtlety. But an awareness of mutual roguery does not prohibit, and may even encourage, the growth of affection. And if these two men are indeed to be described as rogues, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that Butler was by far the more congenial. There was a drollery about

his most outrageous innuendo, a laughing transparency of intention, greatly preferable to the solemn pretences of George.

Butler was at least honest enough to profess no scruples about the game he was playing; and witty enough to play with an elegance that occasionally produced an engaging liveliness of style, a supple turn or cavort of true felicity.

George Onslow, on the other hand, was a man who fluttered about in the dusty gloom and anxiety of a situation that was never quite clear to himself. An element of nervous casuistry made him wish to believe that, in all his odious machinations, he was only representing under many strange, bedraggled and apparently discrepant forms an indescribable something or other, both constant and elusive, which could still be recognised as the offspring of Whiggism. We have seen a surprising and interesting example of this lumbering casuistry in his retrospective thoughts about the Wilkes affair. His aim was to find unity in ubiquity, to be flexible without the loss of apparent firmness, to be honest, or to appear to be honest, without the sacrifice of advantage.

In all of these futile intentions Onslow could be sure of the tact and the obliging pretences of Butler. He could also be sure of a sentiment which appears in these letters as a faintly cynical friendship. That it certainly was a friendship is evident from the tone of the letters—to be quoted presently—which Butler wrote in extreme old age: in these letters the cynicism has evaporated, in spite of some rather stilted flattery; and I think Butler was right when, in a final appeal that his letters might be destroyed, he speaks of them as "letters of warm friendship."

During the American war, Butler published a number of pamphlets under the signature of "Vindex," in which he very naturally supported the Government and the King. In 1772 he issued *A Letter to the Protestant Dissenting Ministers* —who had asked for further relief in the matter of subscribing to the Thirty-Nine Articles. This pamphlet may be taken as an example of Butler's considered style:

"Your Idea of the Toleration you desire is, a full liberty to preach Doctrines contrary to those, which have been esteemed Christian

doctrines in all ages. . . . Have you not heard of Confusions, arising from *diversity* of opinion, *warmly* maintained, upon *essential* points? . . . The nature and design of civil Society are clearly against you . . . If you think fit to rally after your late defeat . . . to treat the legal Toleration you *enjoy* as a Trifle. . . . If this be your future conduct, you will be considered as Men, who do not follow after the things which make for Peace . . . and who, in their Zeal against the Establishment, are more *vehement* and *bitter*, than any Members of the established Church appear to be against them."

Clearly it is evident, even from these brief extracts, that Butler never had the pen of a Junius.

His reward for supporting the North administration, and supplying George Onslow with turtles, information and advice, arrived in 1777 when he was appointed Bishop of Oxford. His professions were now those of an enthusiastic Tory, and ten years after his translation he was preaching to the House of Lords on the death of the royal martyr, Charles Stuart. At least he was not wholly deficient in scholarship, and assisted Woide in copying the Alexandrine MS. of the Bible. He seems also to have been reasonably diligent in carrying out his episcopal duties. He succeeded Lord James Beauclerc in 1788 as Bishop of Hereford, and died in 1802 at the age of eighty-five.

It may be that a rigorous moralist will find little if anything to be said in Butler's favour; but those who can look with tolerance upon the frailties of men, and those to whom the deeper turpitudes of the eighteenth century are not unknown, may take a broader view. As a minister of religion Butler cannot be regarded with the highest respect; though here again one should remember that the Church in his time was lethargic to the point of exhaustion and was little more than a field in which men of extremely moderate abilities and of dubious piety contended with each other for lucrative livings. He was a scheming, political priest, rather Roman than English in his passion for the intrigues of court or council, his readiness to play many parts, and his delight in accomplished ribaldry. He found in George Onslow a man obviously intended by providence to be his own particular patron: not a man whom he despised or whom he could use

for his own purposes by means of concealed or superior cunning; but a man to whom his own frankness would be entirely comprehensible and not in the slightest degree shocking.

The gifts, the little blandishments, the jesting flattery; all are understood equally well by both. To begin with, here is the turtle:

> "This letter comes upon a subject intirely new. I have just received a letter from Jamaica, acquainting me, that a Turtle is consigned to me on board a Ship which is now in the River. I wish She had arrived sooner, that you might have treated the Grand Jury with it. . . . I beg your acceptance of it." (1768.)

A little later he says: "You are indeed my own, and cannot depart from that relation to me, till you divest yourself of the whole of your Character." He then adds nervously, "I hope none of our letters will miscarry."

Butler had no children, but his household was enlivened by the presence of a niece, Louisa Yates, of whom he was extremely fond. "The outlandish girl," he calls her playfully. He writes in December 1769:

> "My Niece is as vain, as she can be, of the notice you and Mrs. Onslow honoured her with. She has been talking Politics incessantly since you left us, and has so well remembered what passed, that she asked a Girl who visited her with false locks in her hair, whether those locks were not false Rhetoric."

In 1770, when Onslow was being assailed in the papers, John Butler becomes appropriately indignant. He has seen "an infamous paper" which is being distributed in Guildford, presumably by the supporters of Sir Joseph Mawbey, whose ambition it is "to thrust you out of the County and himself in."

This was among the early intimations, so hurtful to Onslow, that he was losing popularity among his constituents; and it seems that injurious reports about the finances of the Clandon household (the household of the third Baron) were being circulated as well: "This," Butler had observed, "is only the malice against you diversified."

If the provincial influence of Onslow was declining (and

it certainly was), there could be no doubt of his advantageous position as one of the King's men. Accordingly, Butler was requested by the Bishop of Winchester to ask Onslow whether he would "apply to Lord North in behalf of his Son in Law, Sir Chaloner Ogle, who tells him the Command of the Fleet in the Jamaica Station is now vacant, and that he, being a Captain rather high upon the List, wishes to be appointed to it." And then, to complete this agreeable transaction in the most satisfactory bargaining way: "The Bishop adds, that if the favor should be granted, he shall be happy to oblige my Lord North in return, whenever he has it in his power." Thus, let us hope, these gentlemen jobbers were suitably rewarded. The episode is extremely significant as an indication of the influence in the highest of circles which Onslow possessed at this time.

To Onslow's expressions of concern about the writings of Junius, he replies airily—"leave these fellows to the Devil and themselves." It is most unwise to be unduly excited; and he writes in September 1771:

> "I observe in your letter yesterday, that you are in a confounded passion with somebody. Let me beg you for many reasons to stifle it, and by no means appear to know more than you see. . . . I am glad to hear of the medical opinions—."

He stayed with the Onslows at Ember Court, where he was made so comfortable and was fussed over so agreeably that he was "in the dumps" when he left. But the social pleasures of Ember Court were never allowed to interfere with plans for preferment. "The prospect at a certain place," Butler demurely observes, "seems rather improved during my absence. I made enquiries from one or two knowing hands, and they gave me such answers as were satisfactory to me, and approached very nearly to the final answer I look for with impatience."

When, in 1771, George Onslow and his wife install their son, young Tom, at Cambridge, the Archdeacon hopes that "Mrs. Onslow left her Son in the hands of an accomplished Tutor and chast bedmaker." In the same letter he says that he is "busy considering why I subscribed to the 39 Articles

thirty years ago." He adds, with professional sapience, "I hope this little fence of Articles will be kept up."

The elements of a jocular friendship are frequently combined with elements of the most frank and easy solicitation. Thus, in June 1772, Butler writes:

> "I thank you most cordially for your kind attention to me in acquainting me with your safe return to Guildford at a dangerous hour, when you might have been overturned by your postilion, plundered by a Robber, or seduced by an harlot. . . . May I take the liberty of reminding you of my friend Mr. Barnett's Ambition to be a Member of the Council in Jamaica. I have no motive for wishing it but pure friendship."

The general tone of Butler's letters, particularly those of the later period, tends to become less formal, more friendly, more genially illuminated by the flickering of a graceful wit. Here are two passages from letters written in 1773, prettily displaying the charm and elegance that were packed into the Archdeacon's many-sided character:

> "The town being at present deserted by Statesmen, Courtiers, Lawyers, Nabobs, fine Ladies and well bred Clergymen, you must excuse me if I supply the want of events by Words. I might indeed create matter for your entertainment, but you will find that much better done by those excellent Papers, from which men of all Ranks, Principles and Religions derive the daily sustenance of their minds. Blessed be the government which lets this intellectual Manna drop down upon our Pates every morning. . . . The Queen Regent of this house presents her Compliments." And later: "The Scotch gardener is arrived, and has entered upon his Office with a cool Alacrity. He has already insinuated himself into the affection of my Wife, by promising her early Roses. I shall not wonder, if in a year or two he should supplant John Knight, and clandestinely marry my Niece. I have given her all proper precautions against his penetrating eye, and flatter myself she has pride enough to resist his ambition. But at all events, we shall have early Roses. . . . As you sometimes want paper at Brighthelmstone, I beg you to consider this as mere paper, and make use of it accordingly."

At the end of this year (1773) Butler professes to be tired of seeking after places or promotions (and it must be allowed that he had been slowed-up very considerably) and resolves that he will "wrap himself in literary amusements." In fact,

he has no intention of doing anything of the sort: he is but fifty-six—a mere juvenile in the holy calling and the way to preferment. We have already seen with what anxiety he and his friend Onslow are waiting for the demise of Lord Onslow of Clandon, who is now, parlously though prematurely, in the condition of an invalid. The little jokes about his joyfully anticipated demise are not in the best imaginable taste, but sometimes there is a grinning, roguish honesty about them which tends to disarm the censorious. The hopes founded upon the change of ownership at Clandon are naturally combined with hopes of preferment; for George Onslow will have much greater influence when he has floated up to the Peerage. And so Butler writes (in three separate letters) in 1774:

> "I hope you will remember me when you have any intelligence true or false. I have heard none since you left me, but that the weather is cold, that Rheumatic disorders go about, that Mackerell are now in perfection, that Pease will soon come in . . . that Parlt will not sit much longer. . . . A very worthy Clergyman at Winchester has just had an apoplectic fit, and will die. How strangely that fit has mistaken its direction! These observations occur to me much oftener than I hope they will some time hence. . . . Lady Onslow dined with us last Thursday. I inquired very affectionately after my Lord. She told me he was better, but had been ill lately. You may imagine how deeply I was affected. . . . I shall ask no man to make my transition easy, having had much disobligation to the Whigs."

This comment upon the subject of "transition" is pleasantly significant. The Archdeacon, like his patron, is ready to set sail on a Tory course if it suits him better.

In 1774, acting as a zealous watch-dog for Onslow, the Archdeacon warns him that he has been "marked out as the Author of the Middlesex measures"—a reference to the Wilkes affair—and begging him not to appear at Epsom: that is, not to show himself at the county political meeting. By this time, it would seem, Onslow had already made up his mind not to face the electors: he knew very well that his reception as a turn-coat would be extremely unfavourable to the family interest. It therefore happened that Wilkes went into Parliament and Onslow went out.

Well might the Archdeacon cry with appropriate indignation (October 1774): "Wilkes Lord Mayor & Member for Middlesex!!!"

By 1776 the man who had resolved to "wrap himself in literary amusements" was eager to push forward again on the way to promotion. His friend Onslow was now "my dear Lord," with a corresponding increase of weight; and the health of the more eminent men in the Church becomes a matter of close and anxious consideration. The more imminent the demise of these excellent men, the more superbly inflated are the hopes of Archdeacon Butler. All the signs of decay or disease are noted with ripening and vigorous optimism, and recorded with complacent accuracy:

> "Our Bishop . . . heard that the attack was followed by spitting blood. I have known that cured, but not at 73. A week or fortnight will be decisive. . . . The Abp of York is declining apace. The powers of his Stomach are gone. . . . The Bp of Sarum is hastening after him. There are others in the same road. So that something will probably happen before Christmas, I care not what, but think the first vacancy, whatever it is, will be the most desirable. . . . The Abp of York is by this time out of breath. London has the refusal of it, and has taken time to consider. You know how that ends in the case of a Woman."

It should of course be remembered that the Archdeacon is not necessarily in hopes of rising to York. What happens when a member of the hierarchy dies is a general move-up and a new shifting of places: a scamper in the holy musical-chairs. This is when ambitious people like Butler try to jockey themselves (and why not?) into a favourable position. And Butler did not depend wholly upon the interest of George Onslow: he trotted off to Lambeth, where he chatted with chaplains and was apprised of the latest moves in the game.

Then came some not unreasonable hopes of getting the Bishopric of Oxford. Too confident of this, Archdeacon Butler signed himself "J. Oxford elect." Like Onslow in 1772, he was congratulating himself prematurely. Many polite regrets were expressed at Lambeth, and assurances of a move at the next opportunity. "So there," writes Butler,

"there is an end of all the nonsensical part of the Dream. If the rest should ever become more substantial than it appears to me at present, I shall take to it calmly, for the passionate enjoyment of it is impossible after this rub."

Whether the promotion to Oxford was "passionately enjoyed" or not, when it came shortly afterwards, it certanily produced, for a time, a noteworthy pomposity of style. A Bishop with six chaplains is a person of consequence, particularly when he is more than half a man of the world with a house in Hill Street.

With all his mundane levity and his frolicsome tricks, Butler cannot be accused of neglecting his profession. He was Bishop of Oxford for eleven years, and there is no evidence to show that he did less than is usually done by the occupants of that see. "I am engaged for six Sundays to come," he wrote in 1779, "to preach about the Diocese for the Society for propagating the Gospel, lest Mr. Gibbon should intirely stop the progress of it." He considered that Mr. Gibbon had been "demolished as an original historian" by Mr. Davies—who was honoured by an interview with the King, and afterwards annihilated by Gibbon in his *Vindication*.

He was "a little dumped" by the "bad news from the West Indies" (the loss of Dominica and St. Lucia to the French), and was perturbed by "some apprehension . . . that when the dark nights come, the French will find their way over to our coast," though not fearful of anything very serious from "the operations of an enemy, which depend upon the absence of the moon." When the outcome of the American war could not be concealed, he observes cautiously and sadly, "These are not times to hazard opinions upon paper."

By 1780 the Bishop had moved into the extremely fashionable quarter of Grosvenor Square, where one of his neighbours was the expiring Mr. Thrale. From this address Lord Onslow gets a letter from a new Butler correspondent, that "outrageous girl," the Bishop's niece, Louisa:

"My Lord,—I should not have ventured to address a letter to your Lordship, if my case had not been very hard and pressing, and your

Lordship has always been the Protector of distressed Virgins. You did me the honor to promise my Unkle, that you would procure three tickets from the Ld Chamberlain for the Ball, one for myself, and two for the ladies, who undertook to guard me, for, I blush to own it, no less than two are sufficient. I have feasted upon this expectation ever since. My daily employments have been disturbed by the Idea, and I have dreamt of it every night. Yesterday I was in hopes to have seen your Lordship at my Uncle's, but there my unhappy disappointment began. You sent an excuse. . . . Under this uneasiness of mind I applied to Mr. Davies, and prevailed with this good man to go to the Ld Chamberlain's office, where he was told, all the tickets were gone. I thought I should drop down at the news, but recovered a little and begged him to go in your name to the Ld Chamberln, whose answer was, that your Lordship had not applied to him, and that the gallery is full. I cannot express the misery that has possessed me all over at this unhappy intelligence. I have lost the relish of all other enjoyments. Even if your Lordship were to recommend me to a substantial, agreeable, tractable young husband, I am doubtful whether at this present writing I should think it full compensation. Your Lordship can feel for others more than most men, especially for an unfortunate, dejected, desolate, destitute, helpless young woman. Let me beg you to exert this amiable disposition of yours in my behalf. I am a real object of Charity. The poor at your gate cannot want your bounty more than I do in this my distress. I humbly beg you to take the whole with all its circumstances into your consideration, and I am sure, if you do, you are too good to refuse to get me the tickets, or the husband, as above described, which may possibly give me comfort."

This letter is dated January 14th from Grosvenor Square. No doubt Uncle John had a hand in the writing of it.

A very strange letter is dated 23rd of May 1782, in which the Bishop complains of scandalous rumours about himself:

"It distracts me day and night to find Nonsense and Illnature so prevalent in the world. The happiness I had planned is interrupted, if not defeated, and one slight natural slip is treated, as if it were a Complication of Guilt."

I am unable to explain this. Butler was now sixty-five; he had lived down the scandal of his association with Wilkes twenty years previously and was occupying a distinguished position in the Church. One cannot suppose that he was

overtaken by some delayed political infamy, and it seems likely that the "natural slip" was a private affair.

When, in his seventy-first year, Butler was translated from the see of Oxford to that of Hereford, the move could hardly be regarded as promotion, and the distance from his friends must have been a grievance to one so fond of being in close touch with the affairs of the temporal world. Writing to Onslow on the 1st of May 1788 he speaks of the "trouble and confusion" in which he has been living for a fortnight; but he does not repine. "I am seated in my final home in this world, and as well pleased as if the name of it had been Durham or Winchester."

No Bishop had preached in Hereford for five years, and the state of the cathedral was appalling:

> "The Cathedral is a most melancholy ruin. I walked with hazard and difficulty over all the rubbish. We flatter ourselves it will be restored in two or three years—."

Butler now described himself as "a man at a distance from the whirlpool." He deplored the illness, the mental decay of "our excellent King." He foresaw innumerable evils. More urgently than ever, he begged Onslow to commit his letters to the flames. He wrote in confidence; he wrote in order to "ease his pillow"; he wrote in freedom and assurance to a friend in whose honour he placed his trust.

The Bishop saw nothing but harm in the "Arguments against the Slave trade." He was not inhumane: it was precisely because of his percipient, prophetic and warm humanity that he wished the trade to continue (what did he really know, one may ask, about the sickening horrors of the slave-ships and the "Middle Passage"?). "The great Champions of Humanity," he insisted, "will commit more Cruelty in carrying this inhuman Law than they charge upon the Planters." His views upon the French Revolution are sounder, though curiously deflected:

> "The French affairs are the result of all the vanity, levity, folly, treachery and false policy of that devoted nation for a century past. But the American business has brought on their punishment forty or fifty years sooner, by poisoning the frivolous understandings of the people, and turning them from Puppies into Banditti."

The Bishop's niece, Louisa, married in 1791; the health of his wife began to cause anxiety; and it was not long before he felt that he was "crumbling to dust by degrees." Yet it cannot be said that he was querulous, or deficient in courage. There is a gallantry and resource in his later letters which reveal the finer side of a character that was not wholly commendable.

When Onslow was concerned with raising the Surrey Militia (once more embodied as a safeguard against invasion —or so it was hoped), he wrote a charming letter to Lady Onslow, hoping "that Lord Onslow's fencible Cavalry, brave as they are, will not be brought into action," and trusting that he will live to see him a Field Marshal. He was much gratified, a little later, when he heard that the Bishop of Hereford had been "honoured with a Bumper" in the officers' mess of "the Camp at East Bourn,"—his being a name "so insignificant to Warriors."

Lord and Lady Onslow visited the Bishop at Hereford in 1797, finding him both ill and feeble. In the following year he writes in a bravely rallying spirit:

> "For three months past I have lived upon Artichokes, and cannot say enough in praise of that plant. The elder branch of the family became knights of the Thistle in Scotland."

The steady, fluent hand of the earlier letters now begins to falter; though it is never illegible—Butler wrote an exceptionally clear hand—nor does it swerve away from a remarkable straightness of line. "I thank God for the long and happy life I have had, and submit with resignation to my present State."

In 1801 he prepared a volume of sermons for the press. Once more there was an appeal for the burning of his letters —"as in letters of warm friendship there is often some escape of an open heart, which should not find its way into the Press, the Public being an improper Judge of such letters." And then comes a last flicker of the brightest elation, when he is "writing to an Earl of Onslow, who has ennobled the patrimony of his Ancestors many years back, and recommended himself so highly to our present most

excellent Fountain of Honour." It was also very gratifying to see his book of sermons printed, and a copy presented to the King and Queen.

The friend of "the infamous John Wilkes" had now made his peace with all the world. He was to die, when the hour came, respected by those who no longer remembered the troubles and intrigues of the past; or who, if they did remember them, could remember without any trace of resentment or bitterness.

In December 1802 the Bishop's niece wrote briefly to Onslow, telling him of her uncle's death. He was to receive, under the Bishop's will, a legacy of £200 "by way of Memorial."

CHAPTER XV

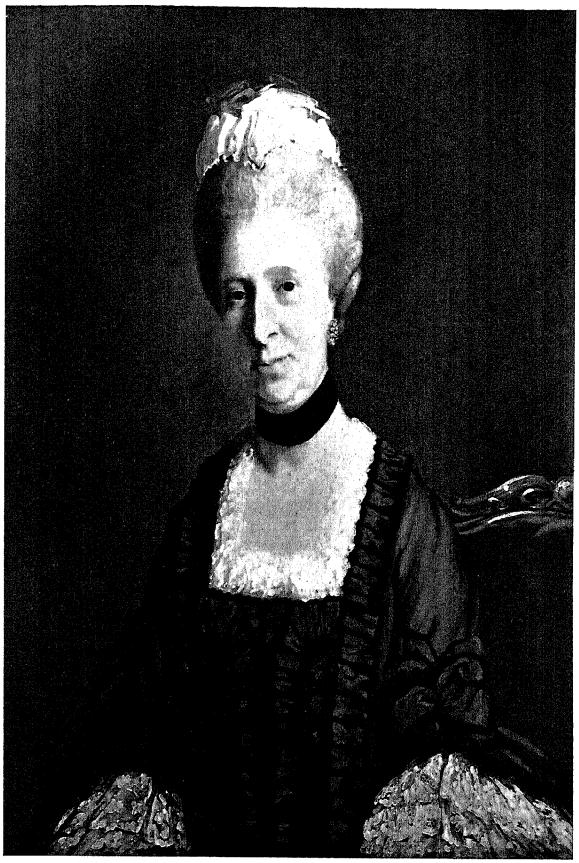
The Trimmer Rewarded

AMONG the pleasant thoughts of the Bishop of Hereford in the last year of his life was the fact of having lived to see "an Earl of Onslow." How, in return for what service, did this happen?

One might suppose that the answer to such a question would be extremely easy: but this is far from being so. If Onslow's career was more than a little dubious, the long-delayed though handsome reward of that career was more than a little bewildering.

He would be a carelessly untruthful man who pretended that Onslow had ever served his King and his country with particular competence, or even that he had played the part of a well-intentioned and honourable man. He had lost the respect of all such men on account of his perpetual shiftiness. As a Lord Lieutenant he had only shown the bare minimum of ability that was necessary in order to prevent him from being relieved of his duties; he had in fact become so negligent or so helpless in the organisation of the militia that an enquiry into his conduct was moved for in the House of Commons in 1798. This motion, put forward by Tierney, became a party issue; and for this reason alone it was defeated by 141 to 22; but the fact remained that the Surrey Militia was far below the strength required by the Act and was both undisciplined and inefficient.

In the House of Lords, Onslow had never said anything of the slightest importance; and after 1788 he never spoke at all. He had no share in the policies of the nation, and was apparently content with his purely domestic appointment as a Lord of the Bedchamber, which he held until his death; if the passive acceptance of nominal duties can be described by such a term as "holding." The best intentions in the



(*Photograph : A. C. Cooper Ltd.*)

Henrietta, Countess of Onslow (died 1802). By John Russell. From the picture in the possession of the Earl of Onslow.

world cannot represent Onslow as anything but a moderately successful time-server, as devoid of scruples as he was of genuine ability. The most that can be said—or hoped—in his favour is that he served the King reasonably well as a palace official in spite of his treacherous correspondence with Carlton House.

Lord Onslow's wife, Henrietta, seems to have been a woman of charm, vivacity and intelligence. In one of the most pleasant of his letters, Bishop Butler (speaking of himself as "a Man, an old Man, an unfashionable old Man") calls her "a Lady . . . of consequence and understanding." In another letter (to Lord Onslow) he says that he has "found a great entertainment for Lady Onslow." This is "a periodical piece" that was published twice a month by "a French gentleman of uncommon parts who had taken refuge in England," and whose work appeared to him "superior to anything he had read of Voltaire's." He adds, "If I know Lady Onslow, she will be much pleased with it—."

There is other and more convincing evidence of Henrietta's brisk intelligence and lively conversation. George Selwyn declared that he had "in the Onslows and Darrels an inexhaustible fund of small talk," and old Horace Walpole, a man who could only tolerate amusing people, was fond of visiting Lady Onslow at Richmond, where she gave him the most entertaining anecdotes: and she and her husband had not infrequently dined at Strawberry Hill.

Black George wore the Windsor Uniform, the strange fancy of the King, borrowed from his cousin, Frederick the Great, and somewhat resembling the Pembroke livery. He seems to have been fairly regular in attending to his Bedchamber duties, and there were times when those duties were not at all easy.

For the King was now lapsing more frequently and for longer periods into phases of definite lunacy. One of these lapses took place in 1788, when he was deeply affected by the suicide of his Principal Equerry. He gabbled foolishly, his popping eyes rolled this way and that way to the great embarrassment of the courtiers, his body swayed as he

walked, and his arms moved awkwardly in meaningless gestures. There was a soothing interlude at Cheltenham; and then things were worse than ever. When driving with the Queen in the Great Park at Windsor, he suddenly exclaimed, "Ah! there he is!" handed the reins to the unhappy Charlotte, got out of the phaeton and walked up to "a venerable oak." Taking off his hat, he bowed politely to the tree and shook with much cordiality one of its lower branches. He then proceeded to make known (to the tree) his views upon the state of Europe and America. To him, it was not "a venerable oak"; it was His Majesty of Prussia....

The treatment of madness in those days can only be described as the treatment of lunatics by other, and worse, lunatics. Plenty of James's Powder was given to the patient; he was purged; he was bled; the "humour" was chased from one part of the body to another; he was occasionally tied up and whipped. As a result of such procedures, any improvement in his condition could only be regarded as miraculous. And when the King began to gobble away about religion, the doctors "drew the worst consequences as to any hope of amendment."

In February 1789 there were prospects of a Regency; commemorative medals were distributed; Mrs. Fitzherbert was dreaming of a Peerage at least; and Onslow must have blessed his foresight in being well on the right side of the Prince of Wales. The Regency Bill was passed by the Commons; and then the King began to shows signs of recovery.

As the Archbishop of Canterbury read the morning service in his room, the King broke in with most unorthodox responses of "Tallee ho!—ware fox!—hoy, forrard!" and these cheerful though inappropriate sounds were taken to indicate that "the prayers had done his Majesty a world of good." Tremendous illuminations, including cows in coloured lights, were put up in London, and the Queen herself ordered a specially fine transparency by Biaggio Rebecca: it showed the King accompanied by Providence, Health and Britannia.

One would like to suppose that the attentions of Onslow

at this time were considerate and effective and were remembered with gratitude by his royal master. This can only be a supposition, but, in the absence of all proof to the contrary, it seems not entirely unreasonable. In October 1791 Butler wrote, "I am glad to hear your Lordship is returned to the Routine of Court duty . . . under such a Master it is high Luxury and great honour." This would seem to imply an absence from Court duties, but it may imply nothing more than a respite at Clandon.

Of the life of the family at Clandon Park not much is known. Although he was always on good terms with his father, sharing with him a common taste for ribaldry (one of the surest means of retaining affection), Tom Onslow seems to have lived after his marriages—for he was married twice—in Harley Street. His brother Ned was exiled in France.

There are no intimate contemporary accounts of life in the great house at Clandon; one has only an occasional view of royal entertainment or ceremonial festivity. This beauty born of ostentation, this noble and enchanting home, does not seem to have housed an equal splendour of warm natural conviviality and elegance. None of the early Onslows, despite a flickering attention to the arts (which appears to indicate a respect for mere fashion rather than an expression of taste), could be described as a man of learning or culture. The figures who move in those lovely Palladian spaces are those of country squires, morose and eccentric; tolerating, and probably enjoying, the close and appropriate proximity of the stables—so effectively blocking the view from the library windows, and so richly odorous on a frosty morning.

George Onslow, although he had been the friend of Garrick, and although he was more of a courtier than a country gentleman, was equally unconcerned with beauty and learning. He was not even plausibly eccentric; though it is alleged that he kept his father's heart in a marble urn in his dressing-room. He, too, is a dark, unmoved and unmoving figure; a saturnine whiskered man in later life; always an ugly man; and one whose personal elegance could well have been exceeded by his footmen.

Thus one is aware of a false relation between the wasted

beauty of the house and the dull inelegance of those who, in the eighteenth century, were its masters. They would have been less at home among their books and their pictures than lolling in the billiard-room, where they had "an exceeding good full sized Table with Ticker Cover, with Maces, Cues and Balls compleat," or throwing their guineas on the "Trou Madame table" under the light of the sconces. As for the "fine toned Forte Piano," this may have been thrummed upon by their ladies; but music, so far, was not among the tastes and abilities of the Onslows.

In 1791 the Onslows received at Clandon the Princesse de Lamballe, that lovely and unfortunate woman, the friend of Marie Antoinette. She had escaped momentarily from the furies of the Revolution, by whom, not long afterwards, she was torn to pieces. Her first visit was to Brighton (Brighthelmstone) where she had "taken the waters," and she then went on a round of the country houses. The Princesse de Lamballe is said to have been the last person who slept in the state bed at Clandon. She was murdered by the mob not long after her ill-advised return to Paris.

Onslow's attendance upon the King involved him in troublesome or painful scenes, and, on one occasion, in a scene that was positively alarming.

This was in 1795, at the time of the "bread riots" in London, when the people were exasperated by the uncertainties of the war with France, the high cost of living, and the usual (and continued) incompetence of the British farmer. The King himself, though unjustly, was held responsible for the misdirection of affairs and the plight of the poor. On the 27th of October there was a meeting of the "Corresponding Society," a revolutionary or at least a reformatory organisation, held in the open air near Copenhagen House at Islington and attended by a vast crowd—estimated at about 100,000. Two days later the King was insulted, and actually assailed, when he was on his way to open Parliament.

Accompanied in the state coach by the Earl of Westmorland and Lord Onslow, the King, undismayed by a threatening and riotous mob, showed himself to great advantage.

The coach wobbled on its way through a mass of groaning, hooting and angry people (who, at first, had been ominously silent), and there were cries of "Bread!—give us bread!—Peace!—No King, no King!", and eventually a small projectile, "either of lead or marble," was thrown, shot or catapulted through the glass of the window, close to the King. But the best account of what took place on that horrible afternoon is given in the words of Onslow himself, who wrote it down in a mood of perturbation mingled with pious gratitude before he went to bed:

> "Before I sleep, let me bless God for the miraculous escape which my King, my Country and myself have had this day. Soon after two o'clock, His Majesty . . . set out from St. James's . . . the multitude of people in the Park was prodigious. A sullen silence . . . prevailed through the whole. . . . No hats, or at least very few, pulled off; little or no huzzaing . . . Nothing material, however, happened till we got down to the narrowest part of the street called St. Margaret's between the two Palace yards, when the moment we had passed the Office of Ordnance, and were just opposite the parlour windows of the house adjoining it, a small ball . . . passed through the window-glass on the King's right hand, and perforated it, leaving a small hole, the bigness of the top of my little finger (which I immediately put through it to mark the size), and passed through the coach. . . . We all instantly exclaimed, 'this is a shot.' The King showed no alarm." On the way back they had to face a mob that was larger and more tumultuous and, in the words of Onslow, "all of the worst and lowest sort." He continues: "The insulting abuse offered to His Majesty was what I can never think of but with horror, or ever forget what I felt when they proceeded to throw stones into the coach, several of which hit the King, which he bore with signal patience, but not without sensible marks of indignation and resentment. . . . The glasses were all broken to pieces, and in this situation we were during our passage through the Park. The King took one of the stones out of the cuff of his coat . . . and gave it to me, saying, 'I make you a present of this, as a mark of the civilities we have met with on our journey to day.'"

This account (which was published) corresponds very closely with that given by Colchester (*Diary*, etc., 1861). He says: "When the shot was fired, Lord Westmorland and Lord Onslow . . . were extremely agitated, but the King

bade them be still—'My Lords, you are supposing this and proposing that, but there is One who disposes of all things, and in Him I trust.' When a stone was thrown he said, 'That is a stone—you see the difference from a bullet.'"

Bishop Butler of Hereford was inexpressibly disturbed when he heard of this affair, and his comments are of interest, both from the personal and historical points of view:

> "I was indeed somewhat prepared for the infamous business of last Thursday by the accounts we had of a field meeting in broad day light, in which the preparatory steps were taken towards the intended outrage. . . . When I heard of the danger our excellent King was in, and in which you was unavoidably involved, the appearances of health I have felt of late vanished at once, nor can I hope for their return till the Proclamation published has taken some salutary effect. . . . We are all adrift, and in a State of Anarchy, unless means can be found to extinguish the Association of avowed enemies to Peace and Order." He thanks God that "the intended murder did not take place": a touch of piety which may well seem faintly hysterical.

In 1799 Clandon Park was suggested as a possible and suitable residence for "Monsieur"; the royal refugee who was afterwards Louis XVIII. This proposal was rejected by Onslow, who was again wrestling with his damnable militia problems.

Do what he might, it was not easy to militarise the rustic population, who, in Surrey, were obstinately peaceful, and wilfully obtuse and ungrateful when called upon to show an interest in politics and the warrior's glory. However, there was a notable review of well-armed and well-uniformed Volunteers in Hyde Park by the King. Although this took place in June, we are distressed to know that the day was "uncommonly wet" and that "many in consequence caught cold and died."

At the age of seventy, and not ill-satisfied (we may suppose) with his position and record, George Onslow received the greatest honour, the most agreeable shock of his lifetime. He had not anticipated any such thing; nor, indeed, had anyone else. It was the result of a royal caprice, or perhaps, through a grim twist of irony, a misdirected impulse of gratitude.

This event occurred on the 1st of June 1801. The date is of much importance.

At this time the mental state of the King was precarious. He had been sadly worked up over Pitt's proposal for the emancipation of Roman Catholics, or by the version of that proposal which had been conveyed to him by Wedderburn. He had spluttered out angrily that it was "the most Jacobinical thing" he had ever heard of, and he would regard any man who talked such nonsense as his personal enemy. In consequence, Pitt and his principal ministers resigned, and a laborious mediocrity, Henry Addington (Speaker of the House of Commons), was placed at the head of the Government.

But his personal victory over Pitt and his preservation of the Protestant Constitution—for that was how he saw it—did not restore the King to his normal state; if he was ever normal. It was in fact considered inadvisable for him to make very many appearances in public between 1801 and 1804. He was garrulous, flushed and irrelevant. In March he relapsed in the most alarming fashion, his life was considered in danger, and it was noticed that "his person had undergone a visible change." He made strange overtures to the greatly embarrassed Duke of Portland. Those hateful doctors, John and Thomas Willis—how he detested them! —hovered professionally in the offing, and were able by a mere diagnostic nod, a glance of silent affirmation, to lead him away to a dark prepared room (withdrawn from all that he loved and understood), perhaps to a final imprisonment.

In June 1801, the period we are now considering, he observed querulously to Eldon that the people had not taken proper notice of his "recovery"; and although on the 4th of June he was "sufficiently recovered to attend at St. James's Palace," where he received congratulations, he could still be dangerously upset by the merest of trifles—even a broken key "gave more uneasiness than it ought." When Malmesbury saw him at Windsor in the autumn of 1801 he described him as "rather more of an old man . . . he stooped rather more, and was . . . less firm on his legs." He chattered with a painful and aimless volubility, showed a

distressing "hurry" of mind, and when he was not incoherent he was usually indiscreet. It would be wrong to say that he was now permanently insane: there were intervals of relative lucidity (he had never shown complete lucidity at any time of his life); there were dependable, decent appearances of a public or semi-public nature; there was, at last, a growth of popular sentiment, of affection for the stricken elderly man who, though politically so catastrophic, was not the worst of English kings, and whose country-gentleman habits were now so touching.

This, then, was the state of the King's mental health when he rode up to Onslow's house on Richmond Green, to the great astonishment of the neighbours and the much greater astonishment of Onslow himself.

A note written by George Onslow, and preserved among the Clandon MSS., gives his own account of the scene:

> "On Monday the first of June 1801 the King with the Queen & the Princesses and Prince Adolphus . . . stopt at my house on Richmond Green . . . when his Majesty from his horse in the most gracious manner possible said he had determin'd to make me an Earl & had chose to be himself the first to inform me of it, & desir'd I would look upon it as a mark of his favour flowing from himself. He added that he had only one Condition to make with me which was that I would not quit the name of Onslow. . . . I told him as well as I could that I was most truly sensible of his Goodness, but I was too much overpower'd with it, as indeed I was, to express the feelings of my Heart . . . this was in the presence and hearing of a great Multitude of the Neighbours who had flocked together to see their most justly beloved Sovereign recovered from his late severe Indisposition. . . . May God bless and preserve him."

Such was the final reward of deception and apostasy, bestowed in ignorance by a half-witted King.

From Old Windsor, almost immediately, there came a note from that extremely soured though venerable woman, a formal voice from the shades of early Onslow history, hardly remembered . . . the long-surviving widow of the third Baron:

> "The Dowr. Lady Onslow returns thanks to Lord Onslow for His pleasing intelligence of His going to be made an Earl, and that His

Majesty was so gracious to inform Him of it in Person, she begs her best Respects of Congratulations also to Lady Onslow, & she shall be happy to see the Earl and Countess here whenever it is agreeable to them, wishes them the continuance of health which is the greatest of all Blessings."

The Earldom was conferred on the 19th of June (1801). In the same year George Onslow redecorated the so-called "Speakers' Parlour" at Clandon in the taste of the Prince of Wales. He made it appropriately grim, an ugly memorial of his trimming career; heavy in brown, crimson, gold; filled with dark shining polished furniture; and ultimately graced with his own portrait in the Windsor Uniform.

Thus honoured, it might have been possible for Onslow to reflect upon his good fortune in peace, were it not for those damned louts, the Surrey Militia, the Onslow curse. These reluctant warriors began to bother him again, and in October 1801 Lord Hobart rudely reminded the new Earl that the strength of his Militia was far below the numbers required by the Act. The County was thus liable for substantial fines and other penalties. Luckily for Onslow, preliminary peace-talks had begun, and the short-lived Peace of Amiens was ratified in March 1802. Thank heaven! —the Militia, or what remained of it, was again disembodied, without an inquest; and it remained in this entirely satisfactory condition, a floating ghost of remembered anxieties, for a whole year. In March 1803 the horrible thing was revived again; the ghost was a body, a troublesome body of weirdly varying dimensions.

There were three supreme difficulties: the first was to get the men; the second was to prevent them from running away after they had been enrolled; the third was to give them proper training under efficient officers. To prevent the running-away, Onslow marched his volunteers, under guard, from the place of enrolment to the headquarters of their unit, "where they underwent such personal alterations as would make them readily known to military men and consequently more readily apprehended if they deserted." I wish I had the particulars of the "personal alteration" which gave the clue to the initiated military men, but these

are lacking.—There seems no occasion to follow the subsequent history of Onslow's Militia: whether embodied or disembodied, it was a perpetual worry.

Henrietta, Countess of Onslow, died in 1802, and the last twelve years of the Earl's life were overclouded by illness and loneliness. He continued to carry out his duties as a Lord of the Bedchamber so long as those duties were required; but in 1811 the King lapsed into a hopeless condition of senile dementia, led or carried about by silent attendants from one room to another, wearing a purple dressing-gown with the Star of the Garter pinned on his breast. "I remember once, when I was living upon the earth," he would observe placidly, smiling at his unresponsive attendant. . . .

The Earl of Onslow, dimly acting as Lord Lieutenant of the county, lived until 1814. On the 17th of May in that year he died at Clandon Park, aged eighty-two, and was buried in Merrow Church.

During his thirteen years of old age and Earldom he had observed many changes in the pattern of society which he could not regard with approval. Under the whip and urge of great revolutions—industrial, political and social—old shapes, old ideas and old fashions were being destroyed or modified with alarming, incautious and irreverent rapidity. In dress alone, a thoroughly dependable symptom of radical change, there was a more complete departure from the old modes, between 1795 and 1810, than at any other comparable phase of our history, either before or after. These fifteen years produced a greater revolution in clothes than the fifty years between 1710 and 1760. But the social diagram at the opening of the nineteenth century was extremely complex and, to those who lived in it, extremely disturbing. In fifteen years the population of the country had risen, on a rough estimate, from ten to thirteen millions. Among those prolific millions were the representatives of a new hybrid class, the mercantile class which could now assume, or at least imitate, the privileges of the aristocracy. To some extent this was due to a more diffused education, including education in manners—a process not yet completed.

Elegant females were receiving carefully adjusted lessons in natural history under the guidance of the Moral Zoologist, who eliminated the more inconvenient and embarrassing aspects of nature herself. But, according to the *Anti-Jacobin* (1807), elegant females could go very much further:

> "Hear them descant on carbon's varied use,
> And o'er the pudding talk of gastric juice;
> Show boils and gout to be, with all their pains,
> Caloric vacillation in the veins;
> Hysterics but some hydrogenic frolic,
> And chyle coquetting bile the cause of colic."

Even philosophy was admitted to the drawing-room. And yet superstition (as a relief perhaps) could still attract the attention of people who imagined themselves both well educated and well bred.

In 1804 a clergyman and his brother were charged at Oxford with having "to the great displeasure of Almighty God, the disparagement of Rachel Fanny Antonia Lee, and the evil example of his majesty's subjects, forcibly carried her away and defiled her, contrary to the statute";—but the prisoners were at once acquitted when it was known that Miss Lee had wilfully thrown away *the steel necklace and the bag of camphor which preserved her chastity.*

Some years later Joanna Southcott produced her *Third Book of Wonders* and announced that she herself, being then sixty-four, would presently give birth to the new Messiah.

Politically, the beginnings of reform were now appearing; but the condition of the working classes was deplorable, and the Luddite riots, which began in 1811, tragically revealed the conflict between the population and the new machines.

When Onslow was in his seventy-ninth year he was enlivened by the Jubilee celebrations at Windsor (October 25th, 1809). "After divine service," we read, "Turnelli was introduced to her Majesty and the Royal party and presented the Jubilee bust which his Majesty had lately sat for." After this, "a refined and classical entertainment" was given at Frogmore. Two cars, each drawn by a pair of "sea-horses," appeared on "a beautiful piece of water."

Neptune had one car to himself, while the other carried a band of music. Flashing transparencies brightly shone above the battlements of the Castle, spelling out in fiery letters "Britannia rules the Waves," while the noble tune was blared out of the trumpets of the band and the loyal throats of the people. The central piece of the whole scene must have been wonderfully moving: "Opposite the bridge an elegant Grecian temple was erected on the mount, surrounded by eight beautiful marble pillars. The interior of the temple was lined with purple, and in the centre was a large transparency with the Eye of Providence, fixed, as it were, upon a beautiful portrait of his Majesty surrounded by stars of lamps."

In society there were some very unpleasant scandals. The Earl of Pomfret had to appear in court and give recognisance "to keep the peace towards his wife." Sentence of death was passed upon Sir Henry Browne Hayes for absconding with an heiress; but instead of being hanged he was packed off to Botany Bay. A bill was filed by Lady Augusta Murray against H.R.H. the Duke of Sussex and Mr. Coutts, to recover the sum of £4000 a year "settled by deed upon Lady Augusta in consideration of her educating and maintaining the children she already had, or might have, by His Royal Highness." Mr. Henry Wellesley, Secretary of the Treasury, was awarded £20,000 damages against Lord Paget who had seduced his wife.

A few months before Onslow's death London beheld, with prescribed official rejoicings, the "solemn entry" of Louis XVIII—who, some years previously, had been denied the hospitality of Clandon. Now it was all very different. Louis walked into Grillon's Hotel, plump and assured, on the arm of the Prince Regent, who was dressed "in full regimentals."

The character of George Onslow has been displayed fully in the preceding pages. It is a drab and ungrateful character; not one of the darkest villainy, but one impervious to scouring or washing or any process of biographical renovation, even by the most improved of modern methods, whether

academic or popular. The fifth Earl of Onslow considers that his ancestor, George, "had all the domestic virtues," while admitting his political shiftiness. I think it is true that George Onslow did possess many of the domestic virtues: it is quite certain that he possessed all the political vices as well as those of a professional courtier. When he expressed his deep respect for his father, the Speaker, he was probably sincere; and he may also have been sincere in the rich tributes he paid to his wife and the first of his daughters-in-law. It would be ungenerous to raise a doubt. And yet the unhappy impression of an unctuous formality cannot be dispelled. His epithets are those of the genteel magazines and his sentiments are those of bloodless orthodoxy. The same touch of platitude lurks in his pious exhortations to his children.

Great ambition, thwarted or deterred by timidity and the absence of any gifts of a high order, is the recurring motive in the life of George Onslow. He could rarely bring himself to risk even a moment's insecurity. No doubt many others were more treacherous than Onslow, but they were treacherous on a grander scale; they had the dark magnificence of true villainy. Perhaps it is fair to add that they had greater initial advantages—those of high rank and influence—and less to lose. By a retributive irony, the conferment of the Earldom coincided with a steady decrease of the Onslow influence in Surrey, partly due to the lowered reputation of the Earl himself, partly to the eccentricity of his eldest son, Tom Onslow, and the exile of his second son, Edward, as the result of a scandal that was not generally known but was probably suspected. For fifty-six years after the death of George Onslow the name of the family was of little account, except on the level of ordinary provincial service, until it was revived in a bright efflorescence of youthful energy and unassailable honesty of purpose by that astonishing boy, William Hillier, the fourth Earl of Onslow.

CHAPTER XVI

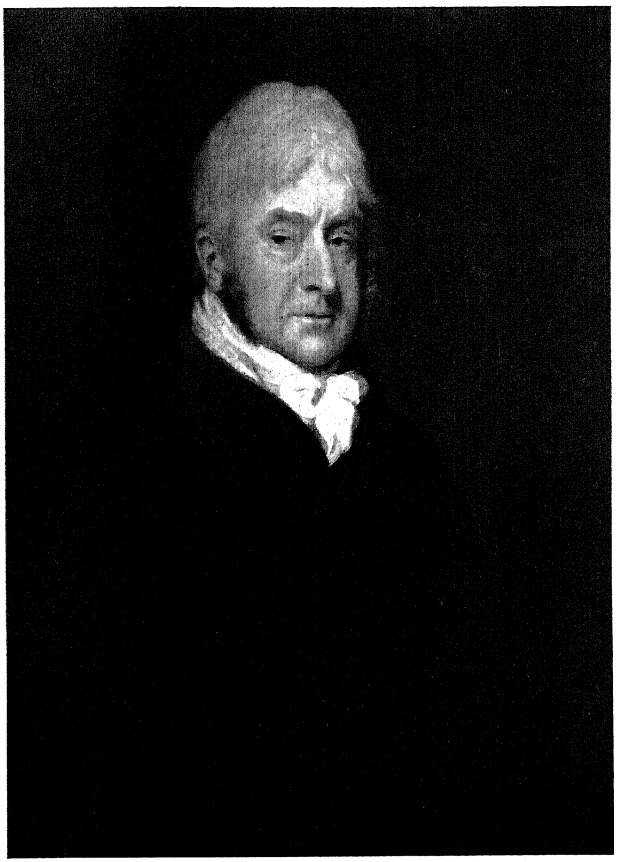
Little T. O.

IT is quite erroneous to suppose that Earls will be Earls. There are times when they refuse to be persons of importance and insist upon enjoying themselves in their own ordinary way. This extremely sensible decision is looked upon as a proof of the strangest eccentricity. It is not necessarily so. An Earl can be an architect like Burlington, a man of taste like Pembroke, or a whip like Tommy Onslow.

But certainly Thomas, the eldest son of George, was the most un-Earlish of all imaginable Earls; the most improbable grandson of the Speaker. His consistent and overpowering ambition was to drive a phaeton drawn by two, four, or even six, black horses; to drive so adroitly, controlling his wheelers and leaders with a flick of the whip and a whisk of the ribbons, a click of the tongue, all so quickly and precisely calculated, that no driver in the land, not even the great Sir John Lade himself, could exceed him in this particular skill. And why speak of Sir John Lade? It was Tom's ambition to drive better than any amateur whip: he aspired to the most supreme efficiency of the most accomplished of professional coachmen:

> "I'm free to confess I should anxiously strive
> Like a Lord to behave, like a Coachman to drive."

Whether his behaviour was that which is commonly expected of a Lord is more than doubtful. Nor did his appearance correspond with general notions concerning aristocratic dignity. He was a man of the Duckleg sort: very small, robust and awkward. A stupid man of such a build would possibly have made himself ridiculous by the affectation of grand airs. But little Tom Onslow ("little T. O." as they called him) was not stupid. He was born a natural grotesque, and he accepted this, not as a disadvantage to be deplored,



(*Photograph : A. C. Cooper Ltd.*)

Thomas, Viscount Cranley, afterwards Second Earl of Onslow (1754-1827). From the picture in the possession of the Earl of Onslow. (Artist unknown.)

but rather as an excuse for jesting or buffoonery of his own particular kind—which, according to Wraxall, "baffled all attempts at description."

Calling himself jocosely Tom Tit, or The Dwarf, or Hunk, or Hogeypogey, he larked and laughed, he exerted himself in spasms of excruciating mimicry, he poured out immense gabbled sentences with such volubility that their meaning (perhaps fortunately) was lost. And yet, as miniatures and a pastel undergraduate portrait very clearly show, Tom was a youth by no means devoid of a smooth and enticing elegance. Nor was he disliked by women, for women are fond of men who amuse them; and his first wife was a woman of extraordinary beauty.

Tommy Onslow was born on the 15th of March 1754, an event of some importance to the gentlemen who ran an obstetrical sweepstake at White's. The entrance fee was twenty guineas, and the runners (half a dozen expectant ladies) were Lady Coventry, Mrs. Onslow, Lady Hilsbury, Lady Duncannon, Mrs. Cholmondeley and Lady Diana Egerton.

He was sent to Harrow, where he met Sheridan, who was four years his senior; and thence to Peterhouse, Cambridge. Graduating M.A. in 1773, when only nineteen, he can be described as one of the best educated of the Onslows, and Wraxall is doubtless right when he says "the great compositions of antiquity were familiar to him." Some time after leaving Cambridge he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant for Surrey by his cousin Richard, the third Baron Onslow—at that time a declining invalid whose death was anticipated with such eagerness by Tom's father. That he should enter Parliament was of course a thing taken for granted, it was the Onslow tradition; and family influence provided him with a safe borough—that of Rye, where his father had made a start in the very year of Tom's birth.

Now, for most young men of twenty-one an election to Parliament, even when the result of the election is a positive certainty, calls for sobriety of demeanour and a speech of well-considered and serious eloquence.

Not so for Tom Onslow. Although Butler, writing to

George Onslow in 1774, had described Tom and Edward as "the two grave gentlemen, your sons," he could hardly, unless he were being intentionally facetious, have chosen a less appropriate epithet. Nothing, except the shock of actual calamity, could make little Tom serious for a moment. He compiled for his electors a speech so extraordinary, so oddly and originally compounded of juvenile fun and of plausible shrewdness, that it must be unique among all documents of its kind. It has fortunately been preserved among the Butler MSS. at Clandon, and is dated April 1775:

"Gentlemen, I have set aside some very agreeable engagements in town, to have the honor of waiting upon you and accepting your disinterested invitation of me to represent you in Parlt. It is usual to profess and promise upon these occasions. I hate both, and have nothing at present in my thoughts, but to be elected. I approve of your borough, as it will give me the least trouble, and can assure you, I think it more honorable to represent you, than the City of London, or the County of Middlesex. They talk of defending the Constitution. I will do all they say. I will defend it against all the world; not my own Constitution, for that must give way to time and accidents . . . but the great magna charta constitution, you know what I mean, the constitution which enables me to take my pleasure, and you to follow your business, which defends us all against battery, murder, robbery, forgery, swindlery, mock-patriotism, and against every nuisance but libels and lies. They promise to reduce the national debt. I promise no such thing, for I don't know how to set honestly about it, else I would ease you at once of the duties upon soap, candles, malt &c., that you might keep yourselves clean, sit up late, and drink like your ancestors.—As to America, I don't know what to say. It cost many millions to conquer that country in Germany. I am afraid those Patriots mean to turn that money into a sinking fund. You know my meaning, and I wish you to understand theirs. If they will send you an exact calculation of the money we shall get by receiving none from thence, you shall command me, provided the balance is in our favor, for as you and I have both frequent occasion for money, we must not lose sight of that Necessary. Till they do this, I will not puzzle my head with schemes and calculations, being convinced from the pleasures I take, that taxation is no tyranny.—I shall be against shortening the duration of Parliaments, because I wish to belong to you for seven years at least, tho' I may not have leisure to see you again till seven years

hence. I am no Nabob and no Creol. I am only a Gentleman. If you can bear with that description of me, you may always command me; and that you may not suffer unreasonably by your choice, or think the Character of a Gentleman quite insignificant, I do, by my own authority, suspend the Act of Parliament against Drunkenness, with respect to this Borough, for the present day."

One has to assume that young Tom actually read this pleasant oration to the electors of Rye. If so (and there is no reason for doubting it) the electors must have been cheered by an harangue so delightfully different from the customary political style. At any rate Tom was elected, and he continued to represent the borough—in unbroken silence—until 1784; when he became an equally silent representative of Guildford.

On the 20th of December 1776 Tom Onslow married Arabella, third daughter and co-heiress of Eaton Mainwaring-Ellerker of Risby Park, Yorkshire. Her portrait in the drawing-room at Little Clandon shows her to have been a strikingly beautiful woman of noble though gentle presence. By her he had three sons and one daughter, produced with dreadful and exhausting regularity. Arabella died in April 1782, and the following obituary notice appeared in the London papers:

"Died in Harley Street . . . sincerely and universally regretted. . . . A few days ago she was in the bloom of health and youth; she was the happy parent of a beautiful offspring, the affectionate wife of a loving though now disconsolate husband, the pleasing friend of her relations, the benevolent benefactress of the poor, and the admiration of mankind; in these times of luxury and dissipation, when the minds of other women of rank, fortune and fashion are bent on the delusive pleasures of the age, hers was chiefly employed in the domestick concerns of her family, and in forming the minds of her children to those paths of virtue, benevolence and Christianity which she herself pursued. . . . She died in the twenty-sixth year of her age."

A private and (I think) a sincere tribute was paid to Arabella Onslow by her father-in-law, George the trimmer: "She was moral, Conscientious and Religious. . . . Her Person and Gentleness of Manners (for she was handsome,

civil, elegant, cheerful, calm and composed at all times and in all places) made her admired wherever she went." After her death, Tom's children went to Clandon Park, where they were looked after by their grandparents.

As for Tom himself—was he really so disconsolate? On the 26th of September 1782, barely five months after the death of Arabella, Mrs. Boscawen (the Onslows' neighbour at Hatchlands) writes to Mrs. Delany:

> "Mr. Onslow, so *lately* a *sorrowful widower*, marries Mrs. Duncombe, who was *not* an afflicted widow! She is a niece of my friend Lady Smythe's."

Mrs. Duncombe, though morally as excellent as Arabella, was a woman of a very different sort. She was the daughter of William Hale of King's Walden, and the widow (and third wife) of Thomas Duncombe of Duncombe Park in Yorkshire. (It will be noted that both of Tom's wives were the daughters of Yorkshire families.)

Charlotte Duncombe was in all probability the ideal wife for Tom Onslow. Her face was that of a florid and resolute woman, neither sensitive nor elegant, though not unkindly, and of a thoroughly dependable, unsqueamish humour; possibly a little coarse. There is indeed a touch of masculinity in her style; a suggestion of dominance rather than of docility in her firm and forthright features.

Mrs. Boscawen's bit of gossip does not refer to the actual marriage but to the engagement, which had certainly been announced without any loss of time. At the moment of this announcement Tom's father (and probably his mother also) was visiting his other son, Edward Onslow, at Clermont-Ferrand. Naturally his friend, the happy Bishop, writes valuable and informative letters on the subject. In November 1782:

> "I most heartily congratulate your Lp. and Ly. Onslow on Mr. Onslow's intended marriage to a Lady, of whom all the world speaks well. It is a great happiness, that he will not be long disused to domestic life." He writes a little later: "His time of life drove him into company again, and that of course threatened the evils, which Marriage either prevents of cures. What could he do better than

make another good choice." Evidently George Onslow had expressed some concern at the rapidity of Tom's decision, and Butler adds: "The great matter is, whether the Lady is of a grave domestic turn; if not, I agree it is too soon, and would have been so at any distance of time."

Early in the following year (1783) George Onslow was still in France, and the wedding was arranged for February. The Bishop had been approached by Tom, who wished him to perform the ceremony, and the Bishop is willing, always provided that Tom's father has no general objection to the marriage: a point which, it would seem, has not yet been made perfectly clear. So Butler writes in January:

"Mr. Onslow called upon me a day or two ago, on the subject of his marriage, proposing to me the honor of performing the ceremony. I took the liberty of telling him, that tho' I felt myself flattered by it, my invariable attachment to you made it necessary, to inquire, whether you approved. He assured me you did. . . . You shall hear from me when the good or the mischief is done." The wedding took place on the 13th of February, and Butler wrote: "She appeared to me a most agreeable Lady in every respect, and will, I think, invite him to domestic life, and ease him of domestic cares."

A most agreeable lady. There are many ways of being agreeable, and there is no reason for supposing that Butler was not entirely justified in his encomium. His opinion was fully shared by Queen Charlotte, in whose household Charlotte Onslow became a Lady in Waiting. To the Queen she was "my dearest Crany," and to her she wrote, many years later, the most touching and affectionate little notes.

Charlotte Onslow must have been some years older than her husband. Her comfortable solidity, of mind as well as of person, was admirably suited to endure, and probably to enjoy, the coarsely whimsical fun and affection of her Tom Tit, her boisterously amorous Hunk. It had been very different with a woman so delicately refined as Arabella.

Among the archives at Clandon there is a manuscript volume of "Family Verses," composed at various times by Tom Onslow. The water-mark on the paper shows that this collection, written in a very elegant clerical hand, was made at some period not earlier than 1832 (five years after Tom's

death), and the internal evidence of the verses themselves appears to indicate that most of them were probably written between 1774 and 1804: only a few are dated. I doubt whether any other family can produce a comparable assortment. Examples have already been given, but the full value of these verses as autobiography and as a part of the family record can only be appreciated by quotation in detail. Many are witty, others are tediously obscene. Most of them are introduced by relevant warnings, enclosed in a whirling loop of the pen in the margin: "Private and for few"; "This requires great explanation to be understood"; "Private and Unintelligible"; "Tho' this speaks for itself, some Explanation is Necessary." Only rarely does one find a few stanzas which "May be read by all." A certain number of prose pieces are included, some of them very competently and ingeniously written.

In this collection there are many references to Charlotte Onslow, to whom Tom Onslow applies the disturbing and uncouth name of "Bruin"; a rude endearment which, apparently, was not resented. He also called her "Button," "Sow" and "Stote"; and heaven knows what besides. He was fond of a punning recurrent rhyme, a device well illustrated in a lubriciously playful ode which he wrote in praise of his wife:

"Pretty sportive lovely Bruin—
You're the Cause of my undoing,
And I lay my certain Ruin
At the feet of Matchless Bruin.
Talk of billing or of cooing,
I directly think of Bruin.
Pleasure there is nothing new in,
If it is not shar'd with Bruin.
Love, tho' I am quite a Jew in,
Yet I spare it to my Bruin.
Meat that I've been all day chewing
I wou'd give to fat old Bruin.
London—Paris—Rome—there's few in
But wou'd give their ears for Bruin. . . .
In the Dog Days I'd lay stewing
Chin to Chin with greasy Bruin:

Her arms were open'd & I flew in:—
Cou'd I do otherwise with Bruin?
This we did: & by our doing
Out popp'd little Carthorse Bruin:
Bye and Bye she'll fall a mewing,
And long keep up the house of Bruin."

But Bruin's one contribution to the "house" was a daughter, afterwards Lady Georgiana Onslow, who died at the age of forty-seven.

For some years Tom was the friend of the Prince of Wales, who addressed him when writing as "My dear Tom," and signed himself "ever most affectionately yours." He often visited Clandon Park, announcing his arrival in the most informal of princely notes (Clandon MSS.):

"I mean to do myself the pleasure of dining this day with you at Clandon & am not quite certain whether I shall pursue my Journey on to Brighton in the Evening or stay at Clandon till tomorrow Morning.—Adieu. I remain my dear Tom

"ever most affectionately

"Yours

"George P."

And there is one of an apologetic nature:

"Dear Tom,—I am conscious of having been guilty of very great neglect & incivility both towards you & Lord Onslow not having come to yr House this Morning as I had appointed, but I was prevented by very particular business; however, if Lord Onslow & you wd be so good as to call upon me about two a Clock Tomorrow I shd be happy to talk ev'ry thing over with you both."

This was addressed to Tom Onslow at his house in Harley Street.

But Prinny's friendships, like his loves, were capricious and ruthlessly annulled; and at some uncertain date before 1790 this particular friendship was irremediably broken. The cause of this break is now unknown, but it was presumably known to the fifth Earl of Onslow, who wrote (Clandon MSS.):

"It is needless to go into old scandals now dead and forgotten . . . the subject of quarrel was not discreditable either to Tom or to

the Prince. Tom, actuated by excellent and generous motives, acted in a manner very inconsiderate to the Prince, and the Prince naturally resented it. More need not be said, but the breach was never healed."

Prinny came to Clandon for the Guildford Races in 1786, when he was still on good terms with Tom, and he was evidently the friend of Tom's father until the death of the Earl in 1814.

There is no reason for doubting that Tom Onslow was a loyal husband, though he lumbered amorously after many women, with an abundance of loutish innuendo and of gutter-boy raillery. But these antics, crude and offensive as they frequently are, probably represent—however strangely or perversely—a complete innocence of intention. They are mere jocularities, of a sort more likely to be found in the servants' hall than in the drawing-room, though sometimes expressed with a twinkling rude felicity and a sparkle of indelicate wit.

The mere fact of Tom's being a favourite in the most correct of all societies—that of Queen Charlotte and her Princess daughters—proves that he knew very well how to behave properly when proper behaviour was required. It was on such occasions that he displayed his abilities as a grotesque, when, according to Wraxall, he could indulge "his most eccentric flights of humour, fancy and mimicry," and when "in order to spare the eye . . . he usually performed them behind a screen."

And so he rattled on with his clowning and his verses, growing a little coarse and lumpy, and red with wine and weather. There was Emma Bristow (whom he could not resist oh); there was Emma Scott (with whom he'd live in lonely cot); there was lovely Charlotte Grimstone "who undertook to teach an awkward fellow how to roll painted papers up into Knots for a Work box"; there was Miss Call ("all yield to Nature's Call"); there was Lady Stowell; there was Lady Evelyn, who received the present of a whip; but above all—far above all—there was Mrs. Bouverie.

Mrs. Bouverie, "Barbarina," was the daughter of Lady Ogle. The Bouveries moved in Court circles and were the friends of the Onslows (it will be remembered that Edward

Bouverie was a member of the deputation sent by Prinny to Mrs. Fitzherbert in 1784).

Tom was Mrs. Bouverie's devoted admirer. He described her rapturously to an anonymous correspondent who "had requested him . . . to commit to paper his real sentiments relative to a most charming woman who had frequently been the topic of their conversation." The genuine simplicity of her character, he declared, was in no degree lessened by the polish of education or by the acquisition of the most fascinating manners: it shone forth "in all its native charms, in every thought she conceives, in every sentiment she expresses." To herself, her entire life was a state of purity and virtue: to the world, a state of constant admiration—"She is the only person who does *not* know that Ideots (if they have eyesight) must adore her: and that men of sense (tho' they were even blind) are inevitably her captives." She had "the most ravishing voice that ever burst forth in syren accents from the Loveliest and most perfect form that human nature cou'd produce." To crown all, she was "the prettiest and easiest Horsewoman in England"—perhaps the highest praise which a hippomaniac like Tom could have bestowed upon any female.

The best of Tom's compositions, and one of much merit, is a prose Journal to Mrs. Bouverie written in 1784 (Clandon MSS.):

"Sept. 16.—Set out from Clandon to the most pleasurable of all my visits;—invariably so: naturally so: preeminently so.—Caught at Egham in a violent shower: Bruin bark'd, and Jacobs was nearly doing so, as he had no great Coat, and the wind was full in his face. Pitied the wind, and arrived at Ankerwyke. . . . Edward Bouverie in Excellent spirits; very good-humour'd, lively and agreeable; and seem'd glad to see Hunk. . . . Ran against Prayers twice, but did not break my shins. . . .

"Sept. 17.—Ferry'd over the water. . . . Doubted whether the Styx was equal to the Thames: Browne is a good judge, and has seen both.—Mem: to ask his opinion when we meet: but never to go over with four in hand, unless Charon's toll is more reasonable than Hampton ferry. . . . Nuneham is a charming place: The finest Verdure, richest hanging woods and most beautiful coup d'œil I ever saw . . . and furniture fit for Carleton House. . . . Grew bor'd

with his damned Guidos, Clauds, Vandykes and Boracios; and went on to Oxford, where a good veal cutlet on a hot plate seem'd a much more rational object of admiration than the portrait of any stupid looking family calf upon cold canvas. . . .

"Sept. 18.—Met Button at night, slept . . . at Woodstock, and went the next day to Sir John Rushout's. . . . Who shou'd be there but Lord and Lady Sandys? a pretty pair as the Devil said when he look'd at his Thumbs. . . . My Lord's a flashy young dog enough: but I think Lord Paget the best looking of the two. Listen'd to Sir John for some hours, because I was his guest and wish'd to appear well bred. Button seem'd languid towards his close of no very succinct account of the rise, progress and conduct of the American war; but as I was the strongest I was in for family anecdotes and family pictures, now and then reliev'd by a digressive extract from Joe Miller, or a pretty copious narrative of the improvements he has made since his father's death—

"The next pleasure to conversing with those we like, is to write to Them: it is a sort of intercourse that mitigates the purgatory of absence and keeps alive the cheering prospect of presence and its attendant happiness. . . . Do send me an old tooth pick! you ill-natur'd thing you . . . you pert, vain, forward, haughty, overbearing, nasty, ugly, immodest . . . thick-legg'd, affected, insincere, unnatural, violent, masculine Toad, you!—."

The end is an example of that peculiar Tommy twist which occurs very frequently; intended, as though by a sudden *boutade*, to shake off a too-obvious accumulation of sentiment or an excess of admiration that is probably causing some alarm to Tommy himself. This trick is carried to an extreme in a poem called *The Bumfiddliad, address'd to Mrs. Bouverie's Ass* ("to be read by few") which I prefer to leave unquoted. Nor do I think it wise to go beyond the title of another poem: *Extempore, on Miss Pelham's saying emphatically that both her Ends were empty* (*alluding to her purse*). But he is often very neat, in a prettily indelicate way, when he throws off an epigram; as, for example, *Advice to Sister Betty, touching her Nuptials, with the frisky old Prebend of Worcester*:

"Be led not by worldly affection
Thy Stillingfleet's hand to refuse;
You may gain by this holy connection,
But believe me, you've nothing to lose."

He drove while he rhymed and he rhymed while he drove: the jingle of the harness and the jingle of his doggerel extemporisations ran along together. While he was "holding the reins and exercising the whip in Piccadilly," says Wraxall, "his mind was not inactive." If he saw his friend, "he would sometimes stop, descend from the phaeton, and entreat me to listen to a lampoon or a couplet which he had just composed: he had in fact a poetic vein, though the stream was shallow.

The stream was indeed shallow, and rarely poetic, but there are times when it sparkles agreeably with a zest and animation which can still be appreciated. When Lady Burrell married the Revd. Mr. Clay, Tom saw the opportunity:

"Sir William Burrell died in May!
And she, in August, turn'd to Clay."

His political verses have all the rude and ribald pungency of the times:

"Mr. Pitt, Mr. Pitt,
Your cause is b—s—t,
Though the K—g, Lords, and Mob, now may court you;
But you sure must have heard,
That no strength's worth a t—d,
If the Commons Themselves won't support you."

And there is always the jovial but affectionate impropriety of his lines to "Bruin" who

"Calls me 'pot-bellied Tom,' without wishing to palliate,
Or conceiving that *I* (if I dar'd) cou'd retaliate.
With such usage as *this* is; so kick'd, cuff'd, and frighted;
If I know what to do, may I live to be Knighted."

We cannot say that Tom Onslow lived in vain or did nothing to merit the highest regard of the British people, for he played and promoted cricket and was one of the founders of the M.C.C. Still, it was in his black phaeton or the little black and green *vis-à-vis* that he enjoyed the highest felicity; jingling and whipping along, a squat overcoated little figure, with a head full of quips and a heart full of crude benevolence.

CHAPTER XVII

Tom and Edward

TOM ONSLOW'S brother, Ned, was even odder, more unexpected, than Tom himself. After all, it is possible to regard little Tom as a horsy Duckleg Onslow of the later baronial type: a jingling gentleman with a dextrous whip and a playful pen. But Edward, the slightly regrettable Edward, runs out of the orthodox family scene in a manner likely to cause distress to some, diversion to others, and of lively interest for all with an eye for the complexities of human aberration.

Edward is revealed in miniatures and other portraits as a youth of a rosy, smooth, well-rounded and amiably stupid face; not in the least remarkable. When sixteen he matriculated at Christ Church, but he took no degree. In 1780, at the age of twenty-two, he was elected, or returned, for the borough of Aldeburgh. In 1781 he applied for the Chiltern Hundreds, left the country, and settled at Clermont-Ferrand in Auvergne.

The reason for this abrupt exit from Parliament, home, country, family and everything which could have made life pleasant for this young man, though hinted at in more than one reference, both published and unpublished, was made abundantly clear when Lord Herbert printed the *Pembroke Papers* in 1950. With Lord Herbert's permission I quote the relevant passage from those Papers. Lord Pembroke is writing to his son, Lord Herbert, on the 6th of May 1781:

> "In the name of wonder, My dear George, what is this Mindening story of our cousin Ned Onslow, & Phelim Macarty Esq? The latter must, of course, by his name be a deflourer of Virgins; & I should hope that no kinsman of ours donne dans le sexe masculin. Pray let me know seriously about it by the return of the post. . . .

Aideu, my dear George, pray be as quick and as particular as you can about Ned Onslow & Phelim Macarty."

Here, then, was the expelling scandal which drove young Onslow precipitately into exile. There is another published reference to this troublesome affair in the Correspondence of George Selwyn; a letter also written in May 1781:

"I have told you perhaps that a nephew of Lord Chedworth's . . . got into the same scrape at Epsom as Onslow did at the Exhibition: ceci prouve la force d'une passion qui est hors de la nature—."

The particulars of the date of Ned Onslow's departure from England are not known. It is certain that he was at Clermont-Ferrand by November 1781. He may have been accompanied by his father and mother, both of whom visited him when he was in France. His father, indeed, seems to have visited him frequently and for long periods and to have shown, in this unpleasant family disgrace, an affection and attentive solicitude which are greatly to his credit. Lord Pembroke's reference to kinship with Ned Onslow, "our cousin," is due to his connexion with the Fitzwilliam family, who were related to the Shelleys, and thus to Ned Onslow's mother (Henrietta Shelley).

A strong though discreetly oblique light is also thrown upon this affair by the Bishop of Oxford, the friendly and admonitory Butler. He had always been fond of Edward, though he may not always have approved of his oddities. He thought it proper that Edward should "turn his thoughts from pleasure to business."—Butler writes in October 1781 (Clandon MSS.):

"In your next, I beg to hear the best account you can give of Mr. E. O., who I remember was once very anxious for my recovery, and I am bound in common justice to be solicitous for his, —as the warmest friend he ever had."

It appears that George Onslow, accompanied by Lady Onslow, decided to go to Clermont-Ferrand in November: it seems probable that George Onslow had been there previously. The Bishop warns his Lordship that he must be particularly careful "as he is going into Popish countries" to "keep clear of Atheism." He advises Onslow not to think

of bringing his son home, though he would rejoice to see the indiscreet and unhappy Edward "in statu quo." He goes on:

> "I think he will be so in a Country, where Men are more at liberty to be charitable on one Subject. I protest I am afraid to encourage you to hope for the same temper here. I have at times taken the sense of Men of the world, and have been disheartened. Yet I do not pretend to foresee the power of time."

However, the power of time did not prevail. In April 1782 the Bishop was evidently reproved by George Onslow for "combating paternal affection." He defends himself from this charge and says that he "did not go further than reporting . . . the opinions of other men."

Thus, it was considered inadvisable that Edward should return to England for a very considerable period. In fact, apart from a few occasional visits, he never returned at all, nor did he preserve his British nationality.

Edward Onslow became, for all practical purposes, a Frenchman, at a time when such a proceeding was peculiarly dangerous. It is at this point, and only at this point, that the Onslow history flows out upon the rosy ocean of pure romance; the rapturous and elegant romance of a lady's magazine. For Edward fell in love. He fell at sight, impulsively and irrecoverably.

There are two accounts of this reassuring and happy romance. According to one, he fell in love with a beautiful voice which he heard at Blesle in the chapel of the Couvent des Filles Nobles; according to the other (which is more plausible) he fell in love, the moment he saw her, with a beautiful, tearful and rebellious girl: in both cases it is agreed that she was "en pension" at the Convent of the Ursulines at Blesle, where the daughters "of the best families in Auvergne" were educated. This lovely girl, in the words of a recent French monograph, appeared suddenly to Edward "avec tous les attraits que les larmes, sans grande douleur, peuvent ajouter au visage d'une belle ingénue." Her name was Rosalie (or Marie) de Bourdeilles de Brantôme, and she was the daughter of Jean, Seigneur de Coutances.

The Seigneur, when formally approached, was not in favour of Edward's marriage to his daughter. His objection

(*Photograph : A. C. Cooper Ltd.*)

Conversation Piece, showing Lord Pembroke (standing). Lord Fitzwilliam (left) and Edward (?) Onslow. Pastel by Daniel Gardner in the possession of the Earl of Onslow.

was based upon difference of nationality, not upon discrepancy in rank: he did not wish his daughter to leave her native land or to become an Englishwoman. Upon hearing this, Edward undertook to buy an estate in France, or (more probably) to induce his father to buy one, on which he would live for the rest of his life. He acquired in due course the château of Chalendrat near Vic-le-Comte, and was married early in 1783. It seems likely that his parents were present at the ceremony, for George Onslow was certainly in France at that time.

And so the unhappy scandal evaporated and Edward proved his normality and respectability in the most convincing manner. The family which he founded was a French family; a family of men gifted in the arts, and whose later members, instead of crossing the Channel to England, crossed the ocean to Canada. No break-away from the Onslow family and all its traditions could have been more complete.

But "les Onslow," at the time of the Revolution, were looked upon with ugly disfavour, and Edward himself was seized and imprisoned by that serenely formidable agent of the Terror, Couthon, in 1789. He was only released, in the appropriately classical and romantic style—a tableau in the taste of David, or Benjamin West—when his wife, accompanied by her clinging children, appealed in person to Couthon himself. He died, two years after the death of his brother, in 1829.

The eldest son of Edward Onslow, Georges, was born in 1784. He has been called, very foolishly, "le Beethoven français," although it has been quaintly observed that his music displayed a style in which "la sécheresse et l'objectivité s'accordaient avec son fond d'atavisme britannique." The fifth Earl of Onslow (Clandon MSS.) says that Georges "was inclined to resent the reception accorded to his compositions and to attribute it to the craze for Beethoven then rampant." At least (in the words of the French commentator) he was a "gentleman composer" who opposed the suavity of the "Judeo-Allemands."

Georges (1784-1853) was an amateur of considerable

Arthur George, the third Earl of Onslow, is one of the

celebrity. He had been taught music as part of a "polite education" and he wrote and published an extraordinary number of very ordinary pieces. He had the leisure necessary for composition and he had the money necessary to ensure the publication of his works. His father sent him to England, where he studied under Hullmandel and Dussek, and afterwards under Cramer. When he returned to Auvergne he brought with him (or so it is alleged) the first pianoforte to be heard in the Puy-de-Dôme. Later, he studied in Vienna for two years. His taste was by no means impeccable, for he greatly preferred Méhul to Mozart and was penetrated with the profoundest emotions when he first heard the overture to *Stratonice*. In music, his aim was brilliance, dexterity and the correct expression of sentiment. His writing is formal, though not without invention and a sense of melodic variety. At the age of twenty-two he began to write satisfactory chamber music, and in 1808 he resumed his musical studies under Reicha, a pupil of Haydn. He composed in all three operas, nine symphonies, thirty-four quintets in addition to other forms of chamber music, and a number of sonatas. He played the 'cello and is said to have been an excellent pianist and organist. His works procured for him the support and admiration of Spontini and Mendelssohn; the latter, at Aix-la-Chapelle, "lui céda un jour le baton"; and he also obtained what was pleasantly described as the "sympathetic neutrality" of Berlioz. Perhaps Berlioz realised that Georges was uncomfortably near his own level of pretentious mediocrity. Schumann briefly criticised one of his symphonies.

Georges was one of the first honorary members of the Philharmonic Society of London, and in 1842 he was elected to the chair at the Institute vacated by the death of Cherubini. His works were much admired by the Prince Consort, with whom he exchanged a set of compositions.

He was a tall and handsome man, described as "un des plus beaux spécimens de la grande race britannique, tempéré et complété par un heureux mélange de grâce française . . . le nez bourbonien, l'ovale correct de la figure, la bouche arquée et souriante." From 1829 he was disfigured slightly by a bullet which accidentally struck him when, in the course

of a boar-hunt, he was reflecting upon a musical theme at Nevers. The bullet affected the nature of his theme, which was developed in a quintet illustrating the various phases of his illness and recovery.

He married in 1808 Delphine de Fontanges, the only daughter of a rich landowner of Aurillac. But although he had thus secured what was ultimately to be a very handsome fortune, his early married life seems to have been that of a relatively poor man. Indeed, the financial state of the Onslow family in Auvergne was at that time precarious, and Edward wrote anxiously to his father on the 15th of August 1808 (Clandon MSS.):

> "I beseech you not to fail to have put into the *funds* the *first rents* that Mr. Boughton will receive for me. . . . P.S. For God's sake let every means be taken to raise some of my farms, and to engage Kirby not to oppose the raising of all the other farms except his.—The additional yearly expense occasioned by George's marriage (which my love and my principles cou'd not let me miss) will distress me terribly, and keep me in a constant state of alarm and suffering."

At least it comforted Edward to know that "Delphine is in *every respect* all I cou'd wish her to be, and has had an exceedingly good education." It was not until 1838 that George's father-in-law died and left to his daughter a large and welcome estate. By 1852 Georges was in a decline, and the writer of the French monograph which I have already quoted says that his last years were embittered by disillusionment. He may have been a musician good enough to realise how far his own works fell below the level of the highest excellence. In the MS. family history it is recorded that "his speech, hitherto crisp and vigorous, became hesitating and feeble." He died suddenly on the 3rd of October 1853 after a walk at daybreak. (Arrangements are being made, as I write, for celebrating the centenary of his death at Clermont-Ferrand by the performance of some of his works.)

The music of Georges Onslow, though not of a splendid order, was, and is, playable: it has a dry and fireless amateur competence; and surely it is remarkable that a musician of any sort could thus have appeared as an offshoot of the Onslow tree.

And Georges was not the only artist who descended from Edward Onslow. There were two painters, both of considerable ability; and there was the eccentric Maurice, who upon hearing that the Duchesse de Berry was taking a cure at Mont Doré, slung around him a fiddle and a harp, got on his horse, and rode over the hills to play a serenade under her windows. . . .

The son of Maurice (and the grandson of Ned Onslow) was the best known of the painters. He painted scenes of peasant life, somewhat in the style of Ostade, portraits, and religious subjects—the best of which is in the church of St. Christine at St. Flour, where he lived. Like all the children and descendants of Edward Onslow, he was a Roman Catholic. The Abbé Trioullier described him as a man of saintly character, who had been the pupil of Ingres, Delacroix, Delaroche, Coignet and Horace Vernet. His "Christian virtue" prevented him from studying the nude—"subjects of danger to the soul"—but his ability as a painter procured for him "quelques mentions et médailles." He combined in the most estimable way the qualities of an ardent royalist and a sincere Christian. His life was one of complete seclusion and much of his time was devoted to prayer. He lived alone in extreme poverty—"il est mort sous le toit de l'hospitalité . . . seule, une sœur de charité lui a fermé les yeux." This gentle and ascetic man is still remembered as "le peintre Edouard Onzlow."

Lord Onslow seems to have visited this peculiar outcrop of his family on many occasions. A magnificent folio of engravings at Clandon, displaying the celebrations at Strasbourg in 1744 upon the recovery of the King, is thus inscribed in Onslow's hand: "This Book was the obliging Present of my worthy Friend Mon: de Chazerat, Intendant of the Province of Auvergne in 1787. It did belong to Madame Henriette (eldest daughter of Louis XV) & it came into Mon: de Chazerat's hands after her Death."

While his brother Edward was thus unexpectedly founding the "famille d'artistes," Tom Onslow was energetically though erratically concerned with his father's confounded

Militia. He was Colonel of the second battalion in 1797: this was disembodied in 1802 and called up again in 1803. For some time the battalion was quartered at Ramsgate, and we are given an admirable first-hand account of Tom Onslow in *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, written at Ramsgate in 1809, and which I here reproduce in part by permission of the publishers (Messrs. Michael Joseph):

> "Viscount Cranley . . . commands the Corps. His Lordship . . . is quite an eccentric character, and I think a much better coachman than soldier. He rides a low poney when on parade and his dress being of the fassion some forty years ago, he has a drole appearance. He has acquired the cognomen of 'Punch on a Pig.' This it seems had come to his Lordship's knowledge, for one morning he rode up to Major H— and said to him loud enough to be heard, 'Major, what do you think the men calls me?' 'I don't know, my Lord' was the reply. 'Why it is Punch on a pig.' The Major began to smile but he was soon stopped by Lord C— asking the Major if he knew what the men called him. The reply was in the negative. 'Well then I will tell you it is B—y Bob.'"

There follows a pleasant anecdote about his Lordship to "shew the goodness of his heart." While driving to camp he overtook a soldier who was lame and late and extremely worried about his reception when he reached his unit. His commanding officer, he said (mistaking Tom for a coachman), was a —. "I will spake for you," said Tom; but the man, though grateful, doubted whether anything "the old coachman" could say would improve matters at all. However, he gladly accepted a lift; and was of course delighted and astonished when he saw how the officer so much dreaded stood "as humble as a Lamb, bowing and scraping," while Tom said, "Get down, my good fellow, did I not tell you I would spake for you."

Tom, who had to write verses about everything, very naturally composed a militia song called "The Surrey Yeomen":

> "Of all the new rais'd Cavalry, it soon shall be confess'd
> That we the Surrey Yeomen are the bravest and the best.
> 'Tis Principles and Property; Not Beauty, Size, or Grace,
> That gives each worthy Yeoman here a welcome and a place. . . ."

Not beauty, size or grace. Nor competence, one may perhaps be allowed to add, if the portrait of Tom as an amateur soldier is to be completed. In 1811, when the battalion was asked to volunteer for service in Ireland, Tom was left at the depot in command of one sergeant, one corporal and eighty privates. He resigned his command and handed it over to his second son, Thomas Cranley, who was then thirty-three.

The Parliamentary history of Tom Onslow is merely a list of elections. He was returned with great regularity for Guildford by means of a systematic dishonesty on the part of the electors which is described by the fifth Earl (with his customary charity) as "good will." Such "good will" had its manifest advantages for the basket-maker, the scrivener, the mealman, the patten-maker, the bargeman, the glazier, the cordwainer, the brewer's clerk, the tin-plate worker, the victualler, the breeches-maker, the peruke-maker, the collar-maker, the chair-maker and the musician whose names were to be found on the roll in 1796. But this kind of thing did not prevent Tom from expatiating publicly and with "much earnestness and energy" about "the unconstitutional mode of influence that existed in the abominable practice of creating votes for the purpose of elections, which excited his abhorrence."

Although Tom Onslow was returned for many years, the Onslow influence was declining: there were many unpleasant indications of this decline, many distasteful allusions to a "liveried Lord," a "placed and pensioned Onslow," and "a footman." There were obvious reasons for this diminution of Onslow prestige, as I have already explained: the first Earl had been rightly condemned as an unscrupulous place-hunter, entirely devoid of political honesty; and his eldest son was little more than a clowning buffoon, who might have been honest, but who was clearly unfitted to represent the people at a time when the state of the country and the insistent pressures that were leading towards reform could not any longer tolerate the dummy politican of an earlier period. The lines printed under Gillray's caricature of Tom Onslow (1804) were extremely pertinent:

"What can little T. O. do?
Why, drive a phaeton and two!!
Can little T. O. do no more?
Yes, drive a phaeton and four!!!!"

Through all vicissitudes, until age overtook him, little T. O., in the words of Captain Gronow, "was always conspicuous in the parks." His, at least, was the celebrity of owning "four of the finest black horses in England."

Tom himself was a man without pretences or pretensions, entirely natural and without any illusions concerning his own abilities and achievement. With engaging candour, towards the end of his life, he wrote an essay on driving, and on his own driving in particular, to which he gave the somewhat pathetic title of "Epilogue." This Epilogue, which is among the MSS. at Clandon, may be regarded as Tom's philosophy and apologia:

> "A few desultory thoughts on a topic not very interesting to society, or useful to mankind . . . far removed from the enquiries of Philosophy, the pursuits of Literature, the genius of Criticism, or the contemplation of those who sacrifice at the shrine of Wit, Knowledge, Imagination or Improvement! . . . 'The Sublime Art of Driving' . . . I deem myself without any arrogance whatsoever, perhaps one of the most competent men in all England to handle this subject; as it requires no talent, and because it would be difficult to find another man in all the British dominions who had been sufficiently idle and stupid enough to have driven four horses nearly every day of his life, for six or eight-and-forty years uninterruptedly! . . . I probably have driven a greater number of horses and a greater number of miles than any gentleman, in any country in all Europe! . . . I drove six horses in hand every day for a whole season at Ramsgate!—in short, every trick that cou'd be played with 4 or 6 horses I have been fool enough to practice for nearly fifty years without one accident or one Rival!"

There is much more, with many unfavourable comments upon the clumsy young amateurs whom he saw driving their "bang-up" vehicles in the parks or on the roads—those who reversed his own ambition and who "looked like coachmen and drove like gentlemen," their ribbons in a tangle, their wheelers and leaders pointing east, west and south. Few if

any of these muffs could have done as he did: the whip of whips, who could swing his four-in-hand at a spanking pace into Tattersall's "with two gloves on."

Driving was the ruling passion of Tom's life, a passion that was never cooled by repetition or diminished by experiment. But there was another passion equally constant; his devotion to his wife. Never could any man have expressed this devotion in a stranger, more inverted way, in such odd whimsies of affectionate indelicacy, in such a blunt lewdness, in patterns of parody almost equal to those of Buckingham:

> "Illustrious Button, whom kind Stars allow
> To call my Trusty and devoted Sow:
> Whose long-mourn'd absence makes me grieve and grunt;
> (Because I've got no little Skugg to hunt:)
> Accept this tribute of my unfeign'd love,
> Which time or Accident can ne'er remove."

The pig and sow motive occurs frequently, and yet another epithet is "lovely Stote."

Other verses are of a topical nature, as, for example, the lines composed when Tom accompanied the royal party in one of their cruises on board the *St. Fiorenzo* frigate (1795). He will do his best "to sing the sweets that spring from pitch, and tar, and ropes," though he observes rudely that "ev'ry dish both flesh and fish seems stew'd alike in tar"; and even more rudely describes the effect of a choppy sea and of Captain Harry's dinners:

> "Brave Harry gives good cheer I own: for when I dine or sup,
> As quick as one good dish goes down, another quick comes up."

More felicitously he obeys the command to "celebrate the Ladies" on board the frigate:

> "Your Ladyships then are the Ships I admire,
> Like the Ships of Old England you're full of good fire."

Another occasional piece was addressed to "the Dutchess of Gordon: Lady Chatham: and Lady Madelina St. Clair: on their having left a piece of paper on a Uniform Coat, on which they wrote, Oh, the dear Uniform—."

"'Oh, the dear Uniform' the Duchess cries,
The lovely Chatham, 'the dear Coat' replies.
Kind, courteous Angels, had I been but here,
To greet you both, so *uniformly dear*!
I then had ventur'd on my Knees to dare
To thank the lovely condescending pair."

The gift by Princess Elizabeth of "a publication of prints taken from her drawings of the Birth and Triumph of Cupid" provided an opportunity for writing some lines to "the Royal Fair" who had portrayed "the fickle God" with her "lovely hand." A more private occasion, celebrated in a more Tommish way, occurred when "the playful charming Sisters . . . made an apple-pye bed with the Author's sheets":

"I never again shall get into my bed
Without thinking, sweet damsels, of you!—
So I thank you, of Course, for the trick you have play'd
(Tho' the Joke is not totally new.)

But if ever I catch you, myself, in those parts
With Kisses the Culprits I'll smother:
For when girls *turn* my sheets, I expect in their hearts
They'll think *one* good turn merits another."

His verses produced an exchange of letters between himself and George Selwyn (1719-91), a very much older man, one of the most quoted though least entertaining of the eighteenth-century wits. Tom's letter refers to an ingenious "misapplication of Pliny's words . . . to show how easily wits can make something out of nothing." He continues gracefully, "My discretion hitherto in life has never kept pace with my vanity, and in the present instance I very palpably sacrifice the one to the other in risquing a correspondence where my inferiority will be so evident."

T. O. must have owed much of his popularity at the Court of George III, more particularly in the Queen's drawing-room, to his dear Bruin. This grotesque little fellow, with his overblown compliments and his absurd antics, would seem to be the strangest of companions for a Queen so insistent upon the observance of propriety, and a shoal of

young misses who could seldom venture upon anything so indiscreet as a giggle. Moreover, his friendship with the Prince of Wales, while it lasted, would have exposed him to the most benumbing of chills in the royal household.

Bruin herself was much more than a Lady in Waiting to the Queen: she was the close friend of a stricken and unhappy woman in the last years of her life, when the King was a lunatic, wandering among the ghostly ruins of a disordered memory where pity alone could be his companion.

To this period of the Queen's life belong those touching little notes that were sent from Windsor to Clandon; and those queer little snippets of labels, accompanying the Queen's gifts of almanacs, books and other trifles, proofs of her affection and esteem for her "dearest Crany." At this time "Crany" herself was becoming an old woman: she survived the Queen only by one year.

Not all of these notes are dated, but the earliest would seem to be one sent from Windsor on the 24th of March 1812:

> "Dearest Crany. I send you my little Prayer book full of good matter. I know but few people like You so earnestly anxious to fulfill their Duty than Yourself, therefore You will not learn much by it, but You will at least find therein the reward You are securing to Yourself by the Benevolence you are Constantly Practising.—Charlotte."

Another note, equally affectionate, comes later:

> "My dearest Crany. You will receive this Packet by Sir H. Holford, which contains yr Fan & a small little Almanac in which you will find my good wishes for the Season & as I am deprived of yr dear Self may I flatter myself that you will kindly receive a trifle sent by the Coach as a proof of my Remembrance.—Charlotte."

On little slips of paper, or cardboard squares, there are the messages that were sent with other gifts.—"The gift of Sincerity to Truth"; "May Every Day and Every Hour of this New Year prove as Happy as you Deserve is the wish of Craney's Sincere Friend"; "Dr Crany Remember me Every Day"; and finally, in the smallest imaginable hand

on a piece of cardboard about one inch square: "Remember the giver of this as one who participates in yr Prosperity as well as Adversity. That the first may ever exceed the latter is the wish of yr Sincere Friend. Charlotte."

The Queen died on the 17th of November 1818, almost exactly a year after the death of Princess Charlotte, the daughter of the Prince of Wales. In the polite words of the *European Magazine*, "the portals of the regal Cemetery were again unclosed"; the Lord Chamberlain expressly forbade the undertakers to "make a public exhibition of the coffin of her late Majesty," and the ladies of the Court were directed to obtain "black bombazines, plain muslin or long lawn linen . . . shamoy shoes . . . crape fans." The King, in his dark rooms near St. George's Chapel, knew nothing of what was going on when, on the 2nd of December, the Queen's body, on a car which ran upon six little articulated wheels and was drawn by Yeomen of the Guard, entirely covered and concealed by an immense black velvet pall, approached the royal tomb. "This ingenious and humane alteration," we are told by an observer, "gave the spectacle a feature of novelty which it was impossible not to approve. . . . The solemn effect produced . . . by the view of an object so interesting, slowly advancing, apparently from a motion of its own . . . was as striking and affecting as it was mournfully magnificent."

Bruin, the Queen's favourite Lady and the much-loved wife of Tom Onslow, died in the following year (1819).

Tom himself was now greatly enfeebled. The years of his Earldom were mainly spent at Clandon Park, where he seems to have been popular. Many stories of his loutish eccentricity have been preserved, none of them particularly amusing, but all of the sort which is likely to endear a man to the common folk—when he happens to be a man of rank. He was a good landlord, and exemplary in his dealings with tradesmen. Prematurely infirm in his last years, he was unable to walk and had to be carried in a chair from room to room by two footmen.

He opened to the public the drive through the park, and it amused him to stand at the library window: grotesque,

red-faced, and perhaps a little crazy, where he shouted with genial ribaldry or pertinent criticism at those who passed by. He still took a delight in food and wine; and when his doctor, called in to cure a touch of indigestion at Christmas, ventured to suggest that the turkey and the pudding and the punch were the cause of this disorder, he was annihilated with "Damn you, Sir; do you suppose that I don't eat a good dinner *every day of my life*?"

This red-faced and white-haired old personage, who doddered about in the library or was jogged along in his carrying-chair, a queer ugly bundle of a man (so oddly wobbling across that superb hall), was never without company. His two unmarried daughters were with him; and, for a time, his three sons: the story of his quarrel with the eldest of these, and its lamentable results, will be told in the next chapter.

He died on the 22nd of February 1827 at the age of seventy-two, and his body lay in state on the great bed with its embroidered Italian hangings and its lofty canopy which may still be seen at Clandon Park. Among those who walked past the bed was Rogers the lodge-keeper at the Merrow gates who, living to the age of ninety, could still relate in the eighteen-eighties his last impressions of Thomas, the second Earl of Onslow.

And what *could* little T. O. do? His descendant, the fifth Earl, said that he was "too wise a man to be led to extremes." But the mere avoidance of extremes hardly amounts to real distinction: indeed, no distinction is within the reach of those who are incapable of running to extremes pretty frequently.

He would have done very well as a jocular, moderately educated, horse-loving, wine-loving, wife-loving, joke-loving country squire. Perhaps, in this sense, it may be said that he did actually do very well, with a little militia-training and some formal duties thrown in. Beyond this we cannot go. Although he delighted in those pungent ribaldries which are among the solaces of the elderly and the ineffective, he did not often rise to the level of genuine wit.

And yet, although he fell short, in stature, gifts and

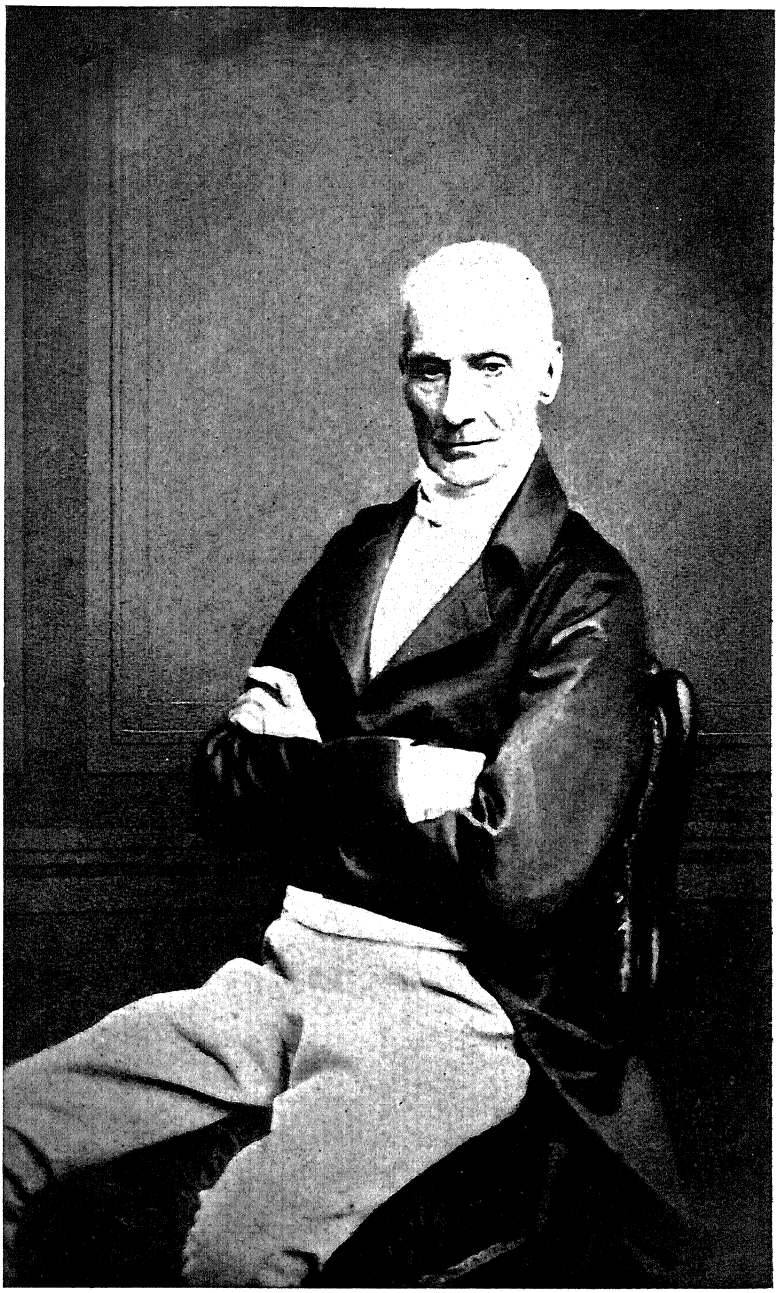
achievement, of what is commonly expected of a nobleman, there is a vigorous and refreshing honesty about little Tom, a native gusto and a smartness of comical invention which make him infinitely more attractive than his father. At least he could never be accused of meanness and evasion. We know of nothing which reflects adversely upon his personal honour. The stories told of him have the bald and rugged quality of elemental farce, they are stories of the stable-room and the inn-parlour, not the pretty flippancies of Almack's or Devonshire House—where Tom would have been embarrassed and unwelcome—but there is nothing in any of them which is morally discreditable;—possibly the reason why most of them are so dull. He was too careless or too pleasant a fellow to become immersed in political intrigue; and although his second wife brought him into close relation with the Court, he never tried to make use of his privilege except as an occasion for harmless rhyming. A correspondent in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, one of the few who wrote on the occasion of his death, observed that "on representation of distress his hand was always open," and added that "he paid his tradesmen with the most regular punctuality." The care of the poor was always one of his first concerns, and he himself would often ladle out the stew from a huge copper cauldron which may be seen, resplendently polished, in the dining-room at Clandon Park.

Thomas Onslow left behind him three sons and two daughters. The eldest son, Arthur George, succeeded him as the third Earl of Onslow.

The second son, Thomas Cranley, the direct ancestor of the present Earl, entered the Scots Guards, commanded a battalion of his regiment in the Peninsula, and saw hot service in 1811. In the following year he married Susannah Elizabeth, the second daughter of Nathaniel Hillier of Stoke Park near Guildford, through whom he acquired properties in Surrey, Essex, Lincolnshire and Norfolk. For many years he commanded the Surrey Militia which he had taken over from his father in 1812, resigning his command to Lord Lovelace at the time of the Crimean War in 1854. He had lived with his wife and children at Clandon Park

during his father's lifetime, but afterwards he bought Upton House at Alresford.

The third son, Edward, also entered the Scots Guards, serving in Egypt in 1801 under Abercromby and in 1809 with Wellesley in Portugal. He settled at Woodbridge near Guildford with his two unmarried sisters.



Arthur George, Third Earl of Onslow (1777-1870). From a photograph.

CHAPTER XVIII

Chiaroscuro

WHILE the Onslow influence in Surrey had thus been sadly reduced by the time-serving intrigues of the first Earl, George Onslow, and the failure of Thomas Onslow to maintain the proper dignity and usefulness of his rank, the family name was acquiring splendid renown upon the high seas.

Born in 1741, ten years after his brother, little Cocking George, Sir Richard Onslow was the son of Lieutenant-General Onslow, the brother of the Speaker. He died in 1817, exactly ten years before the death of Tom Onslow.

Admiral Sir Richard Onslow represented in an almost ideal way the sailor of the eighteenth century. He was brave, bluff, coarse and intemperate, highly skilled in his profession, of unimpeachable honesty, warm and affectionate with his family, zealous in the Service, directly concerned with his men's welfare and the fighting trim of the ships he commanded. No finer seaman ever trod a plank or steered a pinnace.

Richard Onslow entered the Navy when he was ten, and at seventeen he was commissioned Lieutenant in the *Sunderland* on the East India Station under Pocock. After service in Pocock's flagship, *Yarmouth*, this precocious young officer obtained his first command when he was only nineteen. In 1762 he was given a forty-gun ship, the *Humber*, in which he served on convoy duty in the Baltic. From this time his promotion was steady and assured. In 1776 he commanded the *St. Albans* of sixty-four guns, in which he served under Howe during the American war, and afterwards under Barrington. He took part in the repulse of D'Estaing off St. Lucia in the West Indies. After this, he came under the orders of "Foul-weather Jack," Admiral Byron (grandfather

of the poet), a man associated by superstition with tattered sails and roaring seas.

The sequence of Onslow's promotions and activities need not be related in detail. It is enough to record here that in 1790 he commanded the *Magnificent*, a seventy-four; in 1793 he was Rear-Admiral of the White, and in 1794 Vice-Admiral: then, after a short period of command at Portsmouth (where the *Magnificent* was visited by the King and Queen), he was appointed second-in-command under Duncan in the North Sea, hoisting his flag on board the *Nassau*.

At the time of the naval mutinies in 1797 Onslow (riding at anchor in Yarmouth Roads) received an address from his ship's company. This is reproduced in the MS. family history at Clandon:

> "The humble address of the . . . ship's company sheweth that from a due sense of your accustomed clemency and goodness, and being fully assured that your main object has always been as much as possible to remove any inconvenience attending not only your own ship's company but all those under your command, therefore actuated by the hope of obtaining redress from your Honour's hands and through your influence we the aforesaid ship's company do thus humbly beg leave to submit to your perusal a statement of the present grievances we labour under. Having had 19 months' wages due to the ship and being in general in want of almost every article of wearing apparel that may conduce to render our lives comfortable in this situation of life, we flatter ourselves to think your Honour will be kind enough to take the same into consideration and remedy that inconvenience by obtaining leave from the Board of Admiralty for a Commissioner to come to this Port if it be not convenient to have the ship ordered to a King's Port when she might be paid—."

The document shows convincingly that Onslow was both liked and trusted by his crew. Precisely what happened is not clear, but Onslow reported that, in his opinion, the men would refuse to weigh anchor and to leave Yarmouth Roads until the pay was forthcoming. This in fact was true, for the *Nassau* refused to weigh nine days later. However, Onslow appears by this time to have been transferred to the

Adamant, one of the two ships of the line which could be depended upon: the other was Duncan's own flagship, the *Venerable*.

For many weeks Duncan and Onslow hovered off the mouth of the Texel playing an elaborate though entirely successful game of bluff. Signals were made—for the benefit of Dutch telescopes—to ships that were supposed to be in the offing, but, in fact, were not there at all. Or the ships flew different colours at different times, to give the impression that they were merely the screen of an enormous fleet. Gradually more ships—real ships—joined the Admirals, and on the 17th of June came the welcome news that the mutiny was over, and orders were given to blockade the Texel.

On the 25th of July, Admiral Onslow left the *Adamant* and hoisted his flag on the *Monarch*. For nearly eleven weeks the wearisome blockade continued; but at last, on the 7th of October, the Dutch began to shake out their topsails and slowly to move away from the Texel anchorage.

This was the moment for which all had been waiting, though the fleets did not engage in close action until four days later. The number of first-raters on each side was the same (sixteen), but the broadside power of the English fleet was slightly superior to that of the Dutch.

After the signal for action had been given, the ships under Duncan and Onslow bore down upon the enemy's line with a following wind and in loose order.

The hazards of this action were clear. The Dutchmen were moving in line about five miles off shore where the depth of the water was no more than nine fathom. Well aware that a supreme display of courage and of seamanship was now required, Duncan sent up the signal to pass through the line and engage to leeward: he thus exposed himself to the danger of running crippled ships aground, but he would gain the advantage of getting between the enemy and the coast and of throwing his line into disorder. Nautically, of course, the difficulty lay in beating up to windward again after the broadsides had been delivered.

Thus began the battle of Camperdown, as brilliant and as bloody an action as was ever fought at sea. Onslow, in the

Monarch, bore down upon the rear of the Dutch line. So close to each other were the enemy ships that his Captain, Edward O'Bryen, said that he saw no chance of getting through. "The *Monarch* will make a passage," replied Onslow, with a bluff resolution worthy of Nelson himself.

With admirable seamanship, O'Bryen took *Monarch* through the rear of the enemy's line. The gun crews were standing in silence with matches ready, and in silence the Vice-Admiral slipped in past the *Jupiter* and the *Haerlem*. Then, having forced the enemy to swing wide, he let loose both broadsides at once in a single tremendous roar, covering both ships in the rolling and reeking clouds of action.

Duncan, in the *Venerable*, shortly afterwards cut the line in the van, and the battle developed in a series of bloody and thundering duels between ship and ship. On board the *Adamant* (formerly Onslow's ship) one of the men's wives helped her husband in serving his gun, until a round-shot carried away one of her legs. And so the fight rolled and roared; but at last the heavier metal and the fine seamanship of the Englishmen prevailed and the Dutch Admiral hauled down his flag. The surrender of the Vice-Admiral was received by Onslow; a scene commemorated in the heroic manner by John Russell, R.A., who painted or pastelled so many of the family portraits.

His fine behaviour in this battle (admirably seconded by the magnificent handling of his ship by O'Bryen) justly procured for Onslow the highest honours. He was treated, with Duncan, to a dinner by the East India Company, at which Nelson was present. He was given the Freedom of the City of London, and a sword worth a hundred guineas. He was created a baronet; and in 1799 was promoted to the rank of Admiral of the Blue. In the previous year he had resigned his command on account of ill health and he had no further employment.

Admiral Onslow was described by Hotham as being "below mid stature and of a florid countenance with a strong likeness to the Royal Family." His manner was abrupt and irritable, but "his ideas and disposition were alike generous and he was an affectionate husband and indulgent father."

Unfortunately, "he had a nautical predilection for conviviality, without strength of constitution to support it,"—in other words, he was too fond of his grog. This, it would seem, gave people the impression that he was drunk when, in reality, he was merely unwell.

A brief impression of Onslow is recorded by Fanny Burney, dated the 26th of August 1789, "our last day at Saltram":

> "From the window . . . I had a call from Captain Onslow, who was waiting the King's return in the park. He told me he had brought up a brother of mine for the sea. I did not refresh his memory with the severities he practised in that marine education."

The brother was James Burney of the *Bristol.*

Admiral Sir Richard Onslow married in 1773 the daughter of Commodore Matthew Mitchell, by whom he had four daughters and three sons. His younger brother, Arthur Onslow, was Dean of Winchester. "We know," says the fifth Earl, "that he was flogged at Eton." We do not seem to know very much more, except that he secured various clerical appointments, became a Fellow of All Souls, printed two sermons and provided the troops in Flanders with flannel waistcoats.

The Admiral was made a G.C.B. in 1815, and he died at Southampton two years later. In his Will he directed "that his funeral expences should not exceed the sum of twenty pounds, to prevent any unnecessary ostentation; and it is remarked, that 'the funeral of a brave and honest sailor costs a much less sum.'" His personal estate was sworn under £1000. He was "a brave and honest sailor" while he lived, and a poor man when he died.

No member of the Onslow family, after the death of the Admiral, could, for sixty years or more, be described as highly distinguished, though many were usefully employed as Justices of the Peace. In the hands of Tom Onslow, as we have seen, the Earldom had ceased to be noble; in the hands of Arthur George, who followed him, it ceased to be observable.

strangest figures in the family history, or in any family history. He is dark, elusive, mysteriously unpleasant, though rarely definable. Born in 1777, he was educated at Harrow and Christ Church, but (like so many of the Onslows) he took no degree. His grandfather made him a Deputy Lieutenant and a Justice of the Peace shortly after he came of age. He served under his father, Tommy Onslow, in the Surrey Militia: and then comes the astonishing statement—"In 1798 Arthur George resigned his commission and his doings *during the next twenty years* are decidedly obscure" (MS. family history: my italics).

Now, there must be something very extraordinary, something negatively distinguished, about a man who manages to live in decided obscurity for so long a period as twenty years. Where was he, and what was he doing? The questions echo in the cavernous void of the past, and there is no answer. Nothing in the hand of Arthur George, except his name in a book or two, is to be found among the archives at Clandon: no letters exist, so far as I am aware, either from him or to him. Were it not for the MS. history written by the fifth Earl, it would be virtually impossible to give any account at all of this most extraordinary and umbrageous man.

It is known that "he travelled" in the early years of the nineteenth century. He had money. He bought "works of art," and he displayed an extravagant enthusiasm for everything connected with Napoleon Bonaparte.

Walking with Delaroche in the Louvre he pointed out the absurdity, or at least the neglect of realism, in David's dramatic picture of Napoleon crossing the Alps: all that sort of thing was vulgarly theatrical, it was not the way in which heroes and their deeds ought to be commemorated: it was not the veritable scene as it would have appeared to those present! Look at the prancing horse (a show-piece of the *haute école*), the whirling folds of the cloak, the gesture of the outstretched arm, pointing to vacancy—how ridiculous! It would have been so very different:—a cold grey huddled figure on a drenched and weary horse, led forward very slowly by an Alpine guide.

Now, said Onslow, I want you to paint me a picture showing as nearly as possible the *exact* scene. That is what painters ought to do; it is their proper business. You will have to find the guide himself, and he will have to take you over the route, and then we shall get the actual men (if we can) and the actual accoutrements, and you will be able to draw the very rocks and the perilous track, and then we shall have a *true* picture; and of what use is a picture if it is not true?

All this may seem very fantastic, but it is none the less certain that Delaroche found the guide and followed the route and painted the picture, "as far as possible from natural models" which hung for a while at Clandon Park and is now in Liverpool.

This romantic enthusiasm for Napoleon (shared by many Englishmen) led to the purchase of other portraits and relics, most of which appear to have been dispersed. But in Lady Onslow's drawing-room at Little Clandon there is a small but exquisite marble bust of Napoleon by Canova which is said to have belonged to Josephine. Another marble bust, though clearly not from the hand of the master, stands at the foot of the staircase at Clandon Park.

The pictures collected by Arthur George included Reynolds' portrait group of Mr. and Mrs. George Wentworth, three Canalettos, four Ruysdaels and a Hobbema; and among his busts were those of Fox and of Pitt by Nicoli. He also collected Sèvres china and French furniture, most of which were sold at Christie's in 1893, when nine of the Sèvres pieces fetched £1250.

One would like to know whether, in the course of his travels, Arthur George visited his uncle Edward and his family at Clermont-Ferrand. It seems very probable that he did so: it would certainly have pleased him to meet one of Edward's sons who had served in Napoleon's army and who won the Cross of the Legion at Leipsic.

But these twenty years of obscurity flow on with a dark, featureless and level monotony, a stream of unlighted and impenetrable oblivion from the dull surface of which neither image nor incident emerges. There is a prosaic reference to

the hunting of harriers in the Clandon country . . . and there is a poem written to Maria Edgeworth during a visit to Edgeworth Town in 1811: "Lines to Miss Edgeworth on Leaving Her House after a Visit." Of the friendship or the occasion which produced the poem, nothing is known. The ingenuity of the lines, such as they are, depends upon references to the titles of Miss Edgeworth's books (Clandon MSS.):

"Tho' 'Castle Rackrent' as 'Belinda's Fame'
Might in themselves immortalise thy name,
Thy tow'ring genius every walk pervades,
And 'Leonora' paints its lights and shades.
When 'Bulls and Blunders' have beguiled our hours,
'Parent's Assistant' shows us different powers,
'Modern Griselda' now corrects our wives,
Then 'Education' forms our children's lives.
And long as wit, or sense, or taste prevails,
Thy stories will be 'Fashionable Tales,'
While I'm well satisfied that all agree
My pen, like yours, Ma'm, can produce 'Ennui'."

When he was forty-one Arthur George married a woman considerably younger than himself; Mary Fludyer, daughter of George Fludyer and Lady Jane Fane, daughter of the ninth Earl of Westmorland. But this marriage does not raise Viscount Cranley (as he then was) out of the obscurity which enveloped him during the whole of his life. He lived at Clandon Park with his father, Tom Onslow, until—at some date which does not appear to be known—there was a quarrel.

Trifling affairs will bring long-sustained animosities to the point of explosion; and this is what happened at Clandon Park. Evidence makes it sufficiently clear that Tom Onslow had never liked his eldest son (he preferred the second, Thomas Cranley); and one can scarcely imagine a more difficult father than Tom Onslow himself.

The explosion occurred one evening at dinner. "Why d'you never go to Court?" said the Earl to his son; and Arthur George replied with sour asperity that he had no Court suit. Upon hearing this, Tom said that he would lend

him his own—an offer which implies that Viscount Cranley, like his father, was "below the middle size." The reply was admittedly somewhat offensive, for Arthur George said that he had given this "threadbare garment" to his own valet. This indeed was a piece of sullen impudence which might well have enraged the gentlest of fathers, and it threw Tom (who was now an old man) into a crimson and raging temper. Other members of the family were present, and Arthur George's wife—shrill, tremulous and exasperated beyond endurance—rose in a flurry from the table, and with an angry tearful cry of "I hate you all, and I will never come into this house again," she ran out of the room.

After this unpleasant and undignified scene Arthur George and his wife moved into the house known pompously as Clandon Regis, close to the park and on the eastern side of the road which runs from north to south through the village of West Clandon.

Two things at least are clear about Arthur George: he loved his wife as much as he detested his father, and almost everyone else. Having occupied Clandon Regis, his insane, pretentiously malevolent ambition was to make the house finer, larger, more renowned than Clandon Park. He therefore began to make it sprawl out in a grandiose though tasteless way, in a kind of builder's Baroque, by adding rooms and roofs, Corinthian pilasters and irrelevant piles of stonework; so that the whole thing was better fitted to be the home of a retired stockbroker than the seat of a country gentleman.

Viscount Cranley's hatred of his father was extended, when he succeeded him and became third Earl of Onslow, to the beautiful house of Clandon Park and everything which it contained. The havoc and loss due to this brooding, malicious and frustrated man cannot be estimated. He sold the Speaker's collection of portraits. He took away the Russell pictures and all the family plate. It was his intention to rip the floor out of the "Palladio room" and have it laid at Clandon Regis; but from this he was dissuaded by one of his brothers.

When his wife died in 1830 his sorrow was poured into,

and augmented, the dark and thickening stream of his bitterness. Her rooms at Clandon Regis were locked, nothing was to be touched; there was the embroidery, there the needle, threaded and ready as her fingers had left it on the last day of her work.

Clandon Park was never occupied by the third Earl of Onslow when he became its owner. For a period of more than forty years it was totally abandoned by the family.

The gardens disappeared under a wild weedy confusion, a wilderness of tall grass, of interlacing briars, of robustly rioting shrubs, uncontrollable trees, and everything which makes up an English jungle. Birds built in the clammy chimneys, owls hooted on the balustrades, water trickled or ran or spouted from the broken pipes. Swarming bees buzzed in the library, depositing their undisturbed honey in the strangest of corners. Only a few fires were lighted from time to time by "an old woman" who acted as the solitary caretaker; and who grew to be so old that she could do nothing at all. There is evidence that some of the window-frames rotted away completely. Writing in 1841 (fourteen years after the abandonment of the house), Brayley says "the whole house has a forlorn and deserted air; most of the pictures and furniture having been removed; the present Lord Onslow preferring a smaller seat in the adjacent village." He adds, that the library contained "nearly all the works printed at Strawberry Hill."

After the death of his wife, Lord Onslow, darker, more retracted, possibly more insane (for his conduct seems never to have been that of a normal man), withdrew for much of his time to the family property at Richmond, where he converted two houses into one. His desire to make a palatial house of the absurd architectural jumble at Clandon Regis had now evaporated; his life was void of ambition or hope. The few stories that are related of him in the family MS. history are dull and ugly. When he was asked by his agent whether he would let a cottage in Clandon, he snarled stupidly, "Paint it black, and then no other damned fool will think it pretty and want to take it." Yet he seems to have been a popular landlord, though in a somewhat

limited way: he never repaired his houses, but he never raised the rents.

His only son died in 1852; his other child, Augusta, who inherited her father's quarrelsome and refractory disposition, survived unpleasantly till 1891. But Arthur George himself, wretched, useless and unhappy, lived to the great age of ninety-three.

Born in the year when Johnson was at the height of his conversational powers, he had seen the premiership of Gladstone, the period of the great Victorian reforms. He had survived Dickens. He had lived through the last resplendent phase of the English aristocracy, when the merchants and yeomen could justify their claim to be genteel. He had observed (perhaps) the strange decline of taste and elegance, culminating in the curly bulging horrors of 1851; and the vast improvements in the bathroom and the water-closet. Steam had replaced horses for travel, and was driving sails from the sea. Miss Emily Davies began formidably though firmly to organise the education of women, greatly to the advantage of these reluctant though slowly improving islands. And finally, he had passed from the age of the miniature or the flattering canvas to the age of the cheap and veracious photograph.

By his contemporaries he was unnoticed and almost unknown. Although he sometimes appeared in the House of Lords, and was understood to be a "strong Tory" (why are such epithets habitually applied to Tories, I wonder?), he never spoke. The one good deed recorded of him is that he gave the land on which the Royal Surrey Hospital was built on the outskirts of Guildford: this was in 1863, when he was eighty-six. Ten years previously he had revoked the bequest of his pictures to the National Gallery, alleging that the Trustees had issued "an unsatisfactory report." On his ninetieth birthday, in 1867, he received the inevitable silver inkstand from his tenants.

He died at Richmond in October 1870. By the terms his will, he left his pictures and residuary personal estate to his daughter, Lady Augusta Onslow, his executrix; with remainder to his daughter-in-law, Lady Cranley, for life;

with remainder to her three daughters for their lives; with remainder over in default of their issue for the benefit of the Church in the diocese of Winchester.

Arthur George had survived his brother, his brother's son, and his own son. After 1855 it was clear that the property and the Earldom would pass (if he survived) to William Hillier Onslow, then a child only two years old, the son of the third Earl's nephew. This child therefore became the object of the Earl's deep and sombre hatred; so far was the old man removed from the charm and warmth of ordinary human life. He had seen the boy, or so it was alleged, killing a moorhen with a stone; and this had so wrought upon his darkened and wandering mind that he resolved upon the spoiling of the estate and the ruin of the boy's future; so far as these things lay within his power; so far as they could be devised in the crazy wretchedness of his own decline.

A portrait of the third Earl at Clandon Park shows him, perhaps at the time of his marriage, as a pale man with d'Orsay whiskers, a very long prominent nose, thin pinched lips, receding chin, and the general air of a man to whom generosity is unknown; a man of small, mean, vindictive character. In a carte-de-visite photograph, probably taken when he was about ninety, age has imposed a meagre dignity upon his features without the redemption of warmth or kindliness.

This dark and thwarted man, living so long and so wretchedly, could be shown as a tragic figure, if only he were more discernible. As it is, he withdraws into the pretentious though incomplete obscurity of Clandon Regis, and afterwards to Richmond. He left behind him a pitiably neglected mansion and a name of greatly diminished honour. A silent voter, one who rarely spoke and was only rarely seen, he was among the strangest of Earls; stranger, more bitter, more withdrawn as he grew old; moving like a shade among the shadows of a world that, for him, had lost its meaning and its familiar form. Men wondered only at this—that he, a man so cheerless and remote, so little attached in any ordinary way to life, could live to so great an age.

When he died, reluctantly giving place to the boy he hated, it was like the passing of a creature hardly perceptible: so old, so forsaken, so inattentive to his daily concerns, he was a ghost before he died.

His abandonment of Clandon Park implied also the abandonment of the Onslow pride and ideals, a loss of belief in the family's dignity and usefulness, a blackly perverted pleasure in the acceptance of defeat. The old Onslow nobility was lost through family action, and even its relics were scattered or destroyed.

All depended now upon the boy, William Hillier, who, when he inherited a derelict mansion and a name of lost repute, was a youth of seventeen.

CHAPTER XIX

Splendid Youth

GEORGE AUGUSTUS CRANLEY ONSLOW, the father of William Hillier Onslow, was born in 1813; the son of Thomas Cranley Onslow, brother of the third Earl. He was sent to Harrow in 1825, where he distinguished himself as a classic. His annotated Greek and Latin texts were at one time preserved at Clandon. In 1831 he was head of the school; but his Oxford career at Christ Church was disappointing, and he came down with a third.

He was fond of sport, but was thoroughly bored by the Surrey Militia, that persisting family curse. In 1848, when he was thirty-five, he fell in love with Harriet Loftus, the eldest daughter of General William Fraser Bentinck Loftus of Kilbride, a cousin of the Marquess of Ely. Two extraordinary letters relating to his courtship are among the unpublished family papers at Clandon. The first is from George Augustus himself, sent from Upton House, Alresford, the home of his family. Although undated, it was almost certainly written in 1848:

"My dear Miss Loftus.—I almost regret that I did not speak to you on the subject upon which I am now about to write, but the fact was that I felt most painfully the embarrassment of my position and entertaining as I did the sincerest affection towards you, I could not bring myself to enter on an explanation, which however necessary in my circumstances, might be declared by the more romantic of your sex, as somewhat too cold and mercenary, for a very enthusiastic admirer. I have however too good an opinion of your good sense than to feel that you will not readily acknowledge the reasonableness of my conduct in endeavouring to secure a suitable provision before I enter into the exigencies and responsibilities of a married life. In thus writing to you I take for granted that the General has explained to you the nature of the conversations we have had upon this somewhat delicate subject, and as it is one upon

which I hate to dwell, I will say no further than that if your father is enabled to comply with the very modest request which I have presented to him, I trust I shall have your own assurance that I may be considered as the accepted suitor of her, who has long occupied my thoughts, and at length entirely engaged my affections, of your own dear self, whose presence I feel necessary to my happiness, and whose interests and feelings I would proudly hope are now identified with my own."

This is odd enough; but what follows is even more peculiar:

"Much as I desire to hear from you an acknowledgement of reciprocal sentiments towards me, nothing would give me greater pain than to suppose that I might ever possess your hand, without your heart, or that, for the sake of obtaining what might be called worldly advantages, you had consented to sacrifice for ever your peace and happiness in an ill-assorted union. Pardon my suspicions, I ought to know better than to dream of such a thing, but I am afraid I am naturally jealous, and having been, I hardly know how, looked upon by the world as a good 'parti' (certainly without much reason), now that I feel myself in love I cannot help entertaining certain misgivings as to the nature of her feelings, whose amiable qualities have awakened within me the sincerest sentiments of regard and affection. I hope my dear Harriet will take in good part what I have written. . . . I have written to General Loftus by tonight's post, and have entreated him to let me know as soon as possible what steps he will be able to take in securing the provision I have asked for. . . . Whatever the issue of the business be, I trust you will give me the credit for having acted to you throughout in an honourable, respectful and straightforward manner, and I can assure you on my own part that should circumstances unfortunately interfere to prevent our union, I shall ever entertain towards you the same feelings of love and affection, with which you have always inspired me. . . ."

I have quoted the greater part of this letter, because of its period style and its astonishing blend of business, love and respectful conceit. His love is imperishable; but the marriage depends upon the General's ability, and willingness, to plump down a few thousands in ready cash. The same "delicate matter" is raised in an equally astonishing letter from his father, Thomas Cranley Onslow, to General Loftus:

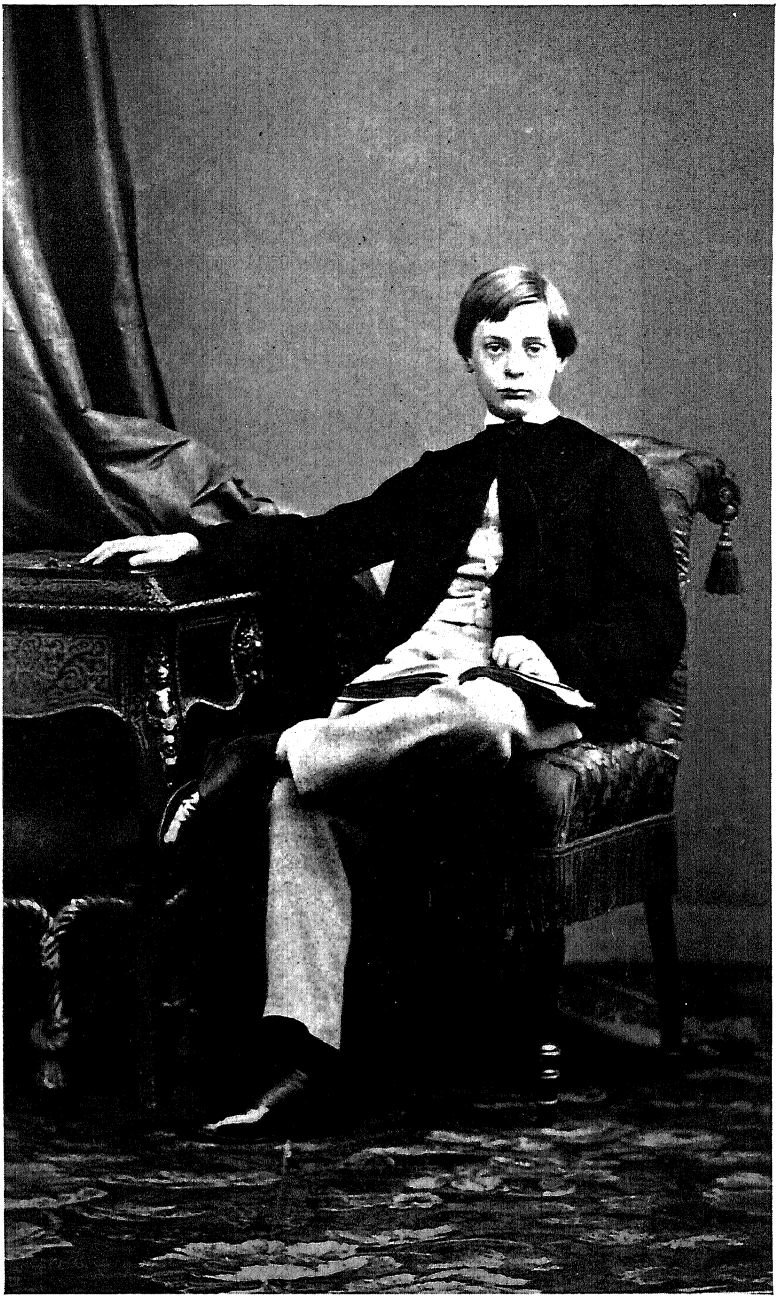
"My son Augustus," he says frankly, "is a man of expensive habits in which perhaps I have too much indulged him, and therein have given him and others . . . reason to believe that my means are very

much greater than they are. Upon his application to me upon the present occasion, I have plainly told him that they are of that extremely limited nature so as totally to deprive me of all power to assist him, beyond the annual addition of £100 to what I at present allow him. . . . My Son . . . has mentioned that it is your intention to hand over to my Son the sum of £3000 as your Daughter's Marriage Portion . . . you will perceive that the Difficulties he will have to struggle with are those that will follow immediately upon his Marriage, rather than those that will beset him after his father's and mother's death. . . . I have thought it my duty to signify to my Son the withholding of my consent . . . on the Grounds I have taken the liberty of stating to you: aware as I am that no Marriage ever turned out well that began in poverty though it may terminate in affluence."

And so, what with the means or the meanness of Thomas Cranley Onslow and the limited liability of General Loftus, it looked as though William Hillier would not succeed in getting born at all. But matters were settled in time: George Augustus married his dear Harriet, and they lived together at Upton House with George's father. Here, in 1853, William Hillier was born: a child so frail, clinging so precariously to life, that he was baptised on the day of his birth. Two years later, when he was out shooting, George Augustus was "incautious enough to drink some stagnant water in a peat bog" (or so we are given to understand), from the effects of which he died.

After the death of her husband, Harriet Onslow lived with her child at Upton House until, in 1861, Thomas Cranley died and the house became the property of his daughters. She then spent a winter at Cannes; where William Hillier ("Hillie"), now aged eight, began his long-continued practice of keeping a diary. He showed already that quick and happy interest in observable things which filled every day of his life with renewed enthusiasm. "Caught a Leafinsect [*sic*] a cricket and two grasshoppers. . . . Went to see Lord Brougham's villa. . . . Had a beautiful view from the top of the hill on which Villa Déonna is situated."

In 1862 Mrs. Onslow took a house at Dorking, and there she lived until her son became the owner of Clandon Park in 1870.



William Hillier, Fourth Earl of Onslow (1853-1911). From a photograph.

William Hillier, after studying at Mr. Tabor's excellent academy at Cheam, was sent to Eton, where he seems to have pleased his masters. A slightly pompous report from one of these—Arthur Coleridge James—was sent to Mrs. Onslow in 1869, Hillier's last year as a schoolboy:

> "Your son has shown his desire to leave Eton with credit, and with the esteem, both of the Masters and his Schoolfellows. . . . I cannot help feeling that his purposes have been unmistakably in the right direction. . . . Besides the knowledge of the world which he naturally possessed, he has showed [*sic*] a tact and a discrimination which the knowledge of the world does not always give. There has not been that loudness and fastness in his demeanour which I was at one time rather afraid of, & from his deportment during the last few months at Eton I am sure we may augur well for his discretion and modesty for the future."

Hillier himself records that he was "nailed" at Eton in this very year for playing billiards. He had visited Paris with his mother in March 1869, where he had dined with Lord Carlingford and Lady Waldegrave, and met the Duke of Cambridge. In October he was at Frankfurt, where he was instructed in music, in riding the velocipede, and in the art of knitting.—The riding of velocipedes became a favourite pastime, and early in the following year (1870), when William Hillier was at home again, there is mention of a "new velocipede" which "answered much better than the last" although it had the inconvenience of being "painted black and yellow."

At the start of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 he expressed a desire to see military service and was offered a post by Von der Thann; but his mother put a stop to this folly. In August 1870 he failed to matriculate at Oxford. Then, on the 24th of October, he made a memorable entry in his diary: "Heard that Lord Onslow had died at one o'clock this morning."

Arthur George had died on the day preceding his ninety-fourth birthday. Not a single member of the family was invited to the funeral at Merrow; for malignity lingered still in the house of Clandon Regis. . . .

It was a strange inheritance; it might have been a dismaying and useless inheritance to a boy less eager, less resolved, less happily elated than William Hillier. The Onslow name and the Onslow mansion were so grievously decayed, the one so darkened, the other so forlorn, that there seemed little hope of an immediate revival. The wilderness of wild weeds and of waving grass under the walls of the house, the fluttering birds in the chimneys and the trickling of water down the broken pipes, the whole dolorous picture of neglect and abandonment, offered a prospect of ruin that might well have daunted the inheritor.

Not only was it estimated that more than £25,000 would be required to put the farms, cottages and fences "in reasonable order," to say nothing of repairs to the great house; but the sanitation at Clandon Park was at least fifty years out of date: in fact, there was "no drainage," and, "except for a well," there was no water supply. Aunt Augusta was determined not to give up the family pictures, or anything else; there was neither furniture in the house nor game in the coverts; those who began to cut a way through the jungle in the park had to be specially protected from the attack of hissing vipers.

The young Earl drove over from Dorking to Clandon Park on the second of November, and (at a later date) recorded his impressions in the Estate Book (Clandon MSS.):

> "I drove . . . to Clandon Park, and was the first person who, for many years, had been allowed to enter the house. It was almost bare of furniture, and all blinds, curtains, etc. had perished. The only occupant was a Mrs. Dallen, a woman of considerable age, who stated that she had lighted fires and opened windows until her strength failed her, and she was compelled to discontinue. The great thickness of the walls, however, preserved the interior in a marvellous manner. . . ."

It was now, when he was only seventeen, that William Hillier showed himself no idle and ordinary youth. He entered upon life and its difficulties with enormous enthusiasm, a happy confidence which never deserted him for a moment, the certain knowledge that he knew what to do,

and that what he did was right; a swiftly-moving exuberant zeal; a clear simplicity of aim and direction; a mind that was neither subtle nor profound, though admirably adapted to all the purposes to which he devoted himself.

In the Estate Book which I have quoted, there is another significant entry:

> "Before the close of the year I was able to get into the house at Clandon, and occupied the library and two rooms immediately above it called Lady Harriet's bedroom and dressing-room." In his diary he noted that the house "had not been touched for forty-three years."

At the same time, the boy's preoccupation with the affairs of his rank and inheritance did not prevent him from taking his customary, natural delight in smaller things—bowls, quoits and the sticking of pictures into scrap-books, the purchase of oysters, the setting-up of a lathe and extreme zeal in the shooting of rabbits.

In March 1871 he succeeded at last in matriculating and went into residence at Exeter College, Oxford. In London he spent a morning at Collard's and Chappell's inspecting organs, harmoniums and American organs. He blithely criticised the singing of Albani. He looked in at the Tichborne trial: a famous affair, in which his uncle, Guildford James Mainwaring Ellerker Onslow, was making a very conspicuous fool of himself. And then, with his usual disarming confidence, he called on his detestable Aunt Augusta:

> "She made me exceedingly angry by her pettishness. Nothing in the House worth having but Delaroche's Napoleon, Thorwaldsen's Shepherd, Canova's bust of Napoleon, & Hogarth's House of Commons, the latter I still hope to get hold of. Made me look at her absurd temple & strawberry beds."

The work of restoring the Clandon estate and of getting the house in order continued all the while, and in this the young Earl was nobly helped by his mother and his cousins, the Cranley girls (the children of the third Earl's son). Furniture was brought to Clandon Park from the house at Dorking, and before long William Hillier organised the first of a long series of amateur theatricals in which he took

the greatest delight. Among the distinguished people who took part in these was the Hon. Robert Milnes, afterwards Marquess of Crewe. Only when he felt "seedy" was there the slightest pause in his varied activities. Nor were those activities of a sort which he could always anticipate. On the 13th of June 1872 he wrote in his diary:

> "Left Ascot by the 4.20 train and dressed in the Guard's Van. To my horror I found that they had packed me up Fat Lane's trousers instead of my own. On arriving at the Middle Temple to dine with the Masters and Benchers on this their tercentenary I was horrified to find it a tremendous affair to which all the Judges and Law Lords were invited: and also Lord Derby and several literary peers. I went in with Dr. Vaughan, the Master, and was further horrified on finding my name down for the toast of the evening . . . which however I suppose I managed fairly, as Lord Derby, Karslake and others came round me to make my acquaintance and congratulate me—."

His diaries, volume after volume, are written with a swift unpausing hand which runs across the paper in loops, whirls, dashes—too hasty for punctuation and often barely legible. He was always jumping into carriages or trains, to be taken here or there with all imaginable speed. One cannot imagine him in a reflective or doubtful mood. Knowing precisely what to do and how to do it, he did everything well. He fitted into the system of his life as naturally and as capably as Arthur Onslow the Speaker had fitted into the Chair: and when he himself became Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords the comparison with Arthur was fully justified. His energy and success in high society were equally remarkable, though equally natural. The diaries are full of such notes as these:

> "Took Lady Sebright in to dinner, who is very amusing. . . . Hayward told several un-Bowdlerised stories after dinner. . . .
>
> "To stay with Lady Molesworth. . . . Nobody thought of going to Church.
>
> "Charlie Beresford drove Royalty in his drag and afterwards rode in a hurdle race which he did not win. . . . The Duke of Edinburgh presented me to the Prince of Wales who received me kindly.

"To Richmond to stay with Lord John Russell who is grown very old and failing."

Once, when Lord Beauchamp invited him to a breakfast party, he found himself placed between two bishops, and then discovered that they wanted him to vote (when the time came for voting) against the Deceased Wife's Sister.—"I have steadily voted for her ever since," he observes.

As the time of his coming-of-age drew near, William Hillier became interested in presentable girls; and they in him. Here, as in all matters, he could be depended upon to act with an undivertible sense of duty and honour: to choose an entirely suitable woman at an entirely suitable time and with entirely appropriate sentiments and enthusiastic decency.

The young women are observed and reviewed with Hillier's customary precision. One (Isabel Warburton) was "small & not pretty, badly dressed, but a good girl"; another (Kate Onslow) was "a good hearted girl, & with education might have been made marriageable"; and yet another, more saucy, "is inclined to flirt, or why make such eyes?" And of course there were rumours. Here is one, dated the 14th of January 1874:

"Walked with the two Wrottesleys. . . . Clara Wrottesley asked me if I liked Clara Middleton & went on to say she did not, as she set going the story about our being engaged, & said that she (C. W.) was behaving very badly setting her cap at me tho' so much older. That she had said in reply that she was nearly old enough to be my grandmother, that she knew me very well and liked me very much. She then went on to recommend me not to marry unless I liked the person very much, unless I chose to marry for money. I contented myself with saying that I thought it very wrong of Lady M. to circulate so ridiculous a report."

William Hillier was orthodoxly religious; he knew that the Church of England was right, just as he knew that the Tory party was right; it was quite impossible for a sensible decent fellow to think otherwise. He therefore recorded some religious occasions: his usual Sunday routine being church in the morning, kennels in the afternoon.

Sitting in Lord Chelmsford's pew at St. Peter's, Eaton

Square, he heard "Wilkinson on the Holy Ghost's influence in the inner man 1 hr. 5 mins."

A more astonishing experience, indeed one which is totally inexplicable, was noted after a visit to St. Peter's, Windmill Street, where he was present at "a curious service and savouring of Blasphemy; Women singing bawdy songs under cover of the hymns." Certainly very curious.

The coming-of-age was celebrated at Clandon on Saturday, the 7th of March 1874. It was a modest affair, showing the good taste of the Earl and his mother. Bells rang "at an early hour"; the villagers presented a card tray and candlesticks; the tenants produced some handsome Queen Anne silver; and William Hillier threw fourpenny-bits out of the windows for the children. After lunch, when the more substantial tenants were honoured by sitting down with the Onslow party, food was distributed to "sixty old people of Clandon and Merrow."

On Monday morning, after "marking trees," William Hillier rushed off to London, got himself appointed Deputy Lieutenant for Surrey, took his seat in the House of Lords, and made his Will.

He quickly set about raising money to put his estates in order. He sold the Hillier property of Stoke Park, disposed of "manœuvring land" to the Government, and "successfully promoted a railway from Guildford to Effingham and Surbiton, which opened up a large residential country and brought his building land near Guildford into the market." With equal success—when was he unsuccessful?—he "took a hand in various commercial adventures."

Clandon Park was now filled with such honest and well-ordered gaiety as it had never known before. Crowds of young people danced and laughed and earnestly rehearsed their amateur theatricals. They rode, they drove and shot, and played croquet on the restored lawns. Nor were great and solemn occasions lacking: when the new Bishop of Winchester and his wife were entertained at Clandon—he being "thin, dry, and having a very small head"—no fewer than one hundred and ten people sat down to luncheon in the great hall:

"I took in Lady Lovelace & Mama the Duke of Northumberland," Hillier wrote in his diary. "I proposed the Bishop's health. . . . Augusta sat between the Bishop and Harkness & was in the 7th heaven accordingly."

While Clandon was thus being restored to life and order and the joys of youth, William Hillier observed with a slightly disapproving amusement the behaviour of his uncle, Guildford Onslow.

This curious man was the second son of Thomas Cranley Onslow, Hillier's grandfather. Having run away at the age of twenty-four with his cousin Rosa Anne, the daughter of General Denzil Onslow of Staughton, he settled down with his wife at Ropley, near Alresford. In 1858 he was returned to Parliament as a Liberal for the borough of Guildford; but for some reason "he never succeeded in gaining the attention of the House of Commons." From 1867 to 1874 he succeeded in gaining a most unpleasant amount of attention as one of the most oddly bewitched and resolute supporters of the Tichborne Claimant.

Sir Roger Tichborne, at the age of twenty-four, sailed for Valparaiso; and after many adventures in South America he embarked in the *Bella* for New York. The ship went down with all hands: and that, presumably, was the end of Tichborne.

The Claimant, whose real name was Arthur Orton, was a butcher, and the son of a butcher, from Wapping. By the most astonishing coincidences, Orton, when in Australia and elsewhere, picked up the story of Tichborne (whom he is alleged to have met in South America) and a mass of information about the family and its estate. It occurred to him that he would represent himself as the missing Tichborne, "picked up by an American ship" after the sinking of the *Bella*, and that he would come to England and claim the title and estate. In 1886 he sent illiterate and mis-spelt letters to Lady Tichborne, Sir Roger's mother, whom he met eventually in Paris, and who, before she died shortly afterwards, made an affidavit declaring that Orton was indeed her son. The Claimant then came to England and became the central figure in two of the strangest and longest

lawsuits ever heard in this country; one as the Claimant and one as a perjurer.

To all reasonable minds the imposture of Orton was perfectly clear. Tichborne had been a well-educated though ill-behaved young gentleman, an excellent French linguist and a horn-player of some ability. The Claimant could neither speak nor write good English; he could give no account of the loss of the *Bella*; the meaning of such a word as "quadrangle" was unknown to him; he thought Caesar was a Greek author, and said that physiology was about "the appearance of the face" or "the formation of the head"; he knew nothing whatever about music and was unaware that the horn was a transposing instrument; he could not say whether John Bunyan was a general, a bishop, a master of foxhounds, or a prize-fighter; and of French he understood nothing at all. His answers were perky, stupid, ill-bred and fatuously irrelevant. He did succeed in producing one notable and deplorable sensation when he alleged that he had seduced "his cousin," Kate Doughty (Mrs., afterwards Lady, Radcliffe), in a grotto. The sensation was greatly intensified by the actual presence of Mrs. Radcliffe, with her husband, in court.

Guildford Onslow displayed, in this case, a degree of spontaneous infatuation so complete and uncritical that it bordered upon the obsession of a lunatic. He seems to have been under the most complete delusions when in the presence of Orton, as though he were actually hypnotised. He invited Orton to his house and provided him with thousands of pounds.

"Over a cigar in my smoking-room," he wrote, "we have passed many an hour, full of anecdote, full of fun." He observed, as one of the many proofs of identity, the skill with which Orton "threw his fly when fishing." Orton's behaviour in the drawing-room with ladies was "kind and engaging": he was "a very good and scientific painter . . . an excellent judge of pictures." At a dinner party he talked of politics, religion, travel, Byron, Shelley and Shakespeare. After his arrest and release on bail the Claimant went to Ropley as Onslow's guest.

Meetings were organised, a fund was raised, *The Tichborne Gazette* was published; and the Claimant, with Onslow, triumphantly entered Alresford preceded by "a large body of respectable looking men with blue rosettes" and accompanied by a brass band. "At the villas and houses of the well-to-do people of the neighbourhood ladies appeared at the windows or at the gates and waved handkerchiefs. . . . The horses were taken from the waggonette . . . the vehicle was drawn into the yard of the Swan Hotel." Onslow made a speech "expressive of his entire belief in the Claimant's virtues and identity"—and the party then adjourned to the Swan, where the Claimant made a speech to the same effect.

Guildford Onslow was denounced by *The Times*; and he, with other supporters of the Claimant, was fined £100 for contempt of Court. Even the complete exposure of Orton (who got a sentence of fourteen years) did not shake Onslow's confidence. In 1875 he published in *The Englishman* a list of the bodily peculiarities of Tichborne (and of Orton), including an "unmentionable malformation" which could have been recognised by "a married woman by whom Mr. Roger Tichborne had a child," and which had earned for him a nickname in the Carabineers which was "too indelicate" to be given in print.

All these doings on the part of Guildford Onslow had infuriated his constituents. He was opposed by his cousin Denzil at the election of 1874: a family conflict which was marked by extreme bitterness and even sank to the level of savage indecency.

When young William Hillier drove to Guildford on the 29th of January 1874 he found that the Claimant and the affair of the grotto were telling heavily against his uncle. One of the most infamous of the squibs consisted of four lines:

> "If the Knight of the Grotto had managed aright
> On the Tichborne estates he'd have lived and got tight.
> But now that the game has quite fallen through
> He's come spying again upon Harry and you."

Hillier drove in again on the following day, when he saw, posted up everywhere, "a good photo . . . representing the

grotto with sheep eating down large elms." In the foreground of this unimaginable picture was Guildford Onslow speaking to the borough of Guildford, who replies, "What, help to rob a woman of her character for the sake of dirty acres and then come and pay your addresses again to me!"

Guildford Onslow was heavily defeated by his cousin, who was returned with a majority of 243—"the largest ever known in Guildford," according to William Hillier.

But this was not the end. Guildford Onslow attacked his cousin in the press whenever he had a chance of doing so, and he circulated a Tichborne poster headed "The Claimant's Opinion of Mr. Gladstone as a Leader!" and quoting a letter from the Claimant: "Dear Onslow . . . I do not think you ought to blame my case for *losing your seat.* Better say because you followed *such a Leader.*"

Uncle Guildford and his Tichborne antics were decidedly awkward. A man of his age (he was in the sixties) ought to have known better. Still, these were not things of much concern to William Hillier. His work, his delight, his exulting purpose, was the restoration of Clandon Park, of the family name, and the honour of an Earldom.

Before long he had transferred the history of the Clandon Onslows from a history of dolorous decline to one of brilliant and sustained revival. He had a quality of enormous gusto, a vast enthusiasm for the affairs of a country estate, the life of a country house; an unimaginative though impetuous concern for all matters political, social and economic. His devotion to the service of his country was magnificently honest, and entirely devoid of selfish ambition. For him, everything had to be done as well as possible, and also as quickly as possible. When he played golf he ran over the course, pursuing the ball immediately after he had struck it. Leisure was totally alien to this energetic nature. Duty and amusement were the objects of equal zeal, enjoyment and resolution. Dressing-up was one of his delights, and he was only dissuaded with much difficulty from appearing in public as a matador.

He danced into the Clandon scene, a bounding sprite

with a head of soft red hair, like a fairy prince announcing transformation in a pantomime.

Up to this time the Onslows, for the greater part, were a little reserved and a little uncertain. They were schemers, depending upon caution and opportunity, rather than open-minded and open-hearted men with a zest for life and a readiness to offer the hand of friendship without an ulterior design. As a consequence, they were themselves regarded with equal caution; and one of the facts which immediately come to the notice of their historian is the almost complete absence (before William Hillier's time) of warm and enduring friendships between the Onslow family and any other. It will be remembered that the only substantial relic of a friendship which is to be found in the earlier Clandon archives is the large collection of letters written by a scheming clergyman to his patron, the first Earl.

But William Hillier gave Onslow affairs an entirely new turn. In the first place, he represented the full dignity, grace and importance of an Earl, which none of his predecessors had been able to do. Without the subtleties or the contaminated suavity of a place-hunter he took up his duties and enjoyed his pleasures with a youthful confidence that was more engaging and more disarming than all the calculated overtures and all the shaping of intention which had so frequently lowered the family reputation in the past.

His friends were many, and uncourted. His enemies (if such there were) disliked him only because of his opinions. The total absence of doubt or cynicism in his nature, his impervious belief in the rightness of his party and religion—so strong that arrogance was unnecessary—gave him without effort many of those advantages which greater, more intellectual, men do not always obtain after a lifetime of devoted labour.

We must forgive him for having disfigured the west front of Clandon Park with his abominable porch. We must refuse to allow such things as taste and aesthetic sensibility a place among the higher virtues; and so many of the higher virtues, if not all of them, were embodied in William Hillier, fourth Earl of Onslow.

Before Hillier's time, the Clandon Onslows were men of position rather than men of action. With Hillier, action came first: position might or might not be its necessary consequence. It is not so much in his formal portraits that the character of this incessantly animated man is discernible. He was more effectively commemorated by "Spy" in 1883 —a spare, brisk little red-bearded figure, tense and alert in every line. . . .

The full story of his later life is beyond the range and intention of this book. In 1875 he married Florence, the elder daughter of the third and last Lord Gardner. (This was the second occasion on which the Jamaica trade had enriched the family, for the first Lord Gardner had married Susannah Hyde Gale, another "West India Fortune.") His mother moved from Clandon to Levyl's Dene, that charming old house, where the great Speaker had once lived, and where she surrounded herself with parrots and little dogs; and where, in due time, her grandson, the fifth Earl, was bitten by a Rosella cockatoo.

In 1880 William Hillier became a Lord in Waiting to Queen Victoria. He was twice Under-Secretary for the Colonies. From 1882 to 1892 he was Governor of New Zealand. His other appointments included those of Under-Secretary for India, Privy Councillor, and President of the Board of Agriculture. He was Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords from 1905 to 1911; in which year he died after a short illness at the age of fifty-eight.

It is no part of my plan to review the Onslow procession from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries; from Richard Onslow, the first of the Speakers, to William Hillier, the fourth of the Earls.

This procession, like others, reveals a notable variety in character, standing and achievement. As to character, one may be inclined to suggest that a deterioration was evident throughout the century from 1770 to 1870; for in the whole of that period the single noteworthy Onslow who deserves unqualified respect is the Admiral, Sir Richard.

There was little of true splendour in the Earldom until it

Guildford Onslow, M.P. (1813-1882). From a photograph.

descended upon the youthful head of William Hillier. The first Earl, on the admission of his own great-great-great grandson, the fifth Earl, lowered the family reputation through treachery and intrigue; the second Earl, Tom Onslow, was a man with no pretence to usefulness or nobility; and the third Earl withdrew himself obscurely from all the proper concerns of his rank—and indeed from all the proper concerns of a man's life.

Of those who preceded the Earls of Onslow, by far the most remarkable was "the great Speaker," Arthur Onslow. Historically he is the most important of all; he contributed in a very signal and distinguished way to the building-up of our Parliamentary tradition. One has reason to believe that the first of the Onslow Speakers, Richard, was a man of great worth, of unpretentious dignity and immense learning. His grandson, Richard the Fox, was far from ordinary; it may be considered that he was also far from honest; his character excites the interest, though it baffles the curiosity, of the historian. Sir Arthur Onslow, son of the Fox, eludes close investigation, slipping away quietly and with no conclusive gesture into the greys and the browns of a harmless and undistinguished life. The Clandon Barons are less ambiguous, but only the first of these (the second Speaker Onslow) is a man of notable character. The second and third of the Barons appeal to us—if they appeal at all—as country gentlemen of pompous magnitude and of querulous temper, with an eye for external aggrandisement and some pretensions to fashion or taste.

But we owe to the Barons one of the loveliest of English country houses, the noble glowing mansion of Clandon Park: lovely at all times, whether summer sunlight passes through the line of the great cypresses, or the lawns are grey and silver in the winter frost.

APPENDIX A

A Brief Note on the Present Family

WILLIAM HILLIER ONSLOW, the fourth Earl, was succeeded by his son, Richard William Alan, the fifth Earl, who was born in 1876. The year of his birth was commemorated by the building of the porch at Clandon Park and the planting of an avenue.

The fifth Earl resembled his father in being a man of ceaseless activities. He married in 1906 Violet Marcia, daughter of the third Baron Poltimore. After a distinguished career in the Diplomatic Service, which he entered in 1901, he served in the First World War. He became Under-Secretary of State for War in 1924. He was a Privy Councillor, and was Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords from 1931 until shortly before his death in 1945. His interests were greatly varied. He was a Fellow of several learned societies, and was at one time President of the Zoological Society.

The sixth and present Earl of Onslow, William Arthur Bampfylde, was born in 1913. He joined the Life Guards in 1931, and resigned his commission in 1938, with the intention of entering political life. But the Second World War compelled an alteration of plans. Lord Onslow served with distinction in the 4th County of London Yeomanry in the Middle East and in Italy. He won the Military Cross in 1942 and was placed in command of his regiment, which he led from the Salerno landing to the passage of the Volturno. The Division in which he served was recalled to England to train for the invasion of Normandy. Ten days after "D Day" Lord Onslow was captured, and he spent the last months of the war in a prisoner-of-war camp.

Shortly after Lord Onslow's return home in 1945 his father died. Clandon Park had been used, during the war, as a repository by the Public Records Office; but as soon as the records had been removed Lord Onslow decided to live in the family home. But this proved impracticable, and in 1950 Lord Onslow and his family moved to a delightful house in the village of West Clandon. The great Palladian house is now opened, seasonally, to the public.

Lord Onslow is Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Surrey, High Steward of Guildford, and Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard.

He married in 1936 Pamela, daughter of the nineteenth Viscount

Dillon, and has two children: Michael William Onslow, Viscount Cranley, born in 1938; and Lady Teresa Lorraine Onslow, born in 1940.

APPENDIX B

The Family Pictures at Clandon Park

As I have stated in Appendix A, when Lord Onslow decided to move from Clandon Park to a relatively small though very charming house in the village of West Clandon he made arrangements for opening the family mansion to the public. It is thus possible for visitors to see many, though not all, of the pictures, tapestry, furniture and other things acquired by the Onslow family, as well as the splendid hall and the rooms on the ground floor. I think it may be interesting to give a very brief account of the earlier family portraits which are to be seen at Clandon Park.

These portraits, naturally of the first interest to the biographer, are not all of the highest order of merit, and the only masters of the English school here represented are Kneller and Hogarth; but the pastels of John Russell and of Daniel Gardner have much to commend them.

Kneller is represented by three portraits—possibly by six. He painted Sir Richard, afterwards the first Baron Onslow (the "second Speaker") and his wife, Elizabeth Tulse, at the time of their marriage; and a later portrait of Sir Richard in old age as Chancellor of the Exchequer. At the time when this latter was painted Kneller himself was an old man, close upon seventy. The first two are excellent specimens of Kneller's dextrous, flexible though highly mannered style. It is not unlikely that the full-length portrait of Elizabeth Knight, wife of the second Baron Onslow, is from the studio of Kneller, as well as those of Sir Henry and Lady Tulse.

Hogarth and Sir James Thornhill painted in collaboration the well-known picture of Speaker Arthur Onslow and Sir Robert Walpole in the House of Commons. Various conflicting opinions have been expressed as to the method of collaboration and the respective shares of Hogarth and his father-in-law: I will not presume to enter this controversy. Hogarth was thirty-three and Thornhill fifty-four when

the picture was painted in 1730. It will be noticed that a scroll in the picture states that it was "done by Sir James Thornhill then a Member of Parliament."

John Russell, who depicted so many of the Onslows, was a Guildford man, the son of a bookseller who was five times Mayor of Guildford. Born in 1745, he became a disputatious Methodist; he caused much annoyance by trying to "convert" his patrons, regardless of their rank, and was once the cause of a riot. He painted the great Methodist leaders—Wesley, Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon—but is best known as a worker in "coloured crayons" or pastel. He was elected an R.A. in 1788. Many royal portraits were painted by him, and in 1792 he was appointed "Painter to the King and the Prince of Wales, also to the Duke of York." In the great house at Clandon, Russell is shown at his best in the pastel portraits of Nathaniel Hillier and his wife (the parents of Susannah Elizabeth who married Thomas Cranley Onslow, brother of the third Earl) and in the charming portrait in oils of Henrietta, Countess of Onslow, as an old lady.

Daniel Gardner is a pastellist who lacks the solid confidence of Russell and is greatly inferior to him as a draughtsman but is pleasing and elegant in manner. He has the defects of a sleek prettiness which may be anticipated in one whose work is fashionable. He was born in 1750 and soon attracted the attention of Reynolds when he was a student at the Royal Academy. Several of his portraits were engraved, and although he only exhibited once at the Royal Academy he had many sitters among people of high rank: one of the best of his portraits is that of Elizabeth Spencer, Countess of Pembroke. At Clandon Park he is represented by an inset conversation piece over the Adam-style mirror in the "Hunting Room". This shows a game of chess—the board wrongly set—between two players whose identity cannot be definitely established, while Lord Pembroke looks on and a negro servant stands in the background. It has been suggested that the left-hand player is Lord Fitzwilliam (1745-1816), Lord Pembroke's cousin; while the other player, of extremely youthful appearance, is possibly Edward Onslow, son of the first Earl. But another suggestion (which I consider less plausible) is that the players are Lord Onslow, afterwards the first Earl, and Lord Fitzwilliam. I am indebted to Lord Herbert for the first of these two theories, which has the advantage of fitting in with the apparent ages of the players and the date of Gardner's birth,—facts which cannot be accommodated with the other hypothesis.

As in all family collections, many portraits of great interest are by

unknown painters. Here the most notable example is the portrait of Sir Richard Onslow, the Parliamentary Colonel, known as the Red Fox, which hangs over the chimney-piece in the Morning Room. In this pale enigmatical face, where the Puritan severity is tempered with a sly and supercilious vigilance, the painter has clearly revealed the subtlety of a character that still remains problematical. The portrait of his son, Sir Arthur Onslow, is also of interest and is a very competent piece of work.

Portraits of Thomas Onslow, the second Earl, in late life, and of his wife "Bruin," though not the work of a known artist, are strongly painted and of a suitably convincing vigour: that of Tom is particularly brisk, florid, irascible, humorous and weather-worn.

In the so-called "Speakers' Parlour" are three large portraits of the Speakers, that of Arthur being attributed to Huyssing, who painted a much better portrait of him—now in the National Portrait Gallery. Over the fireplace is a portrait of the first Earl of Onslow, "Black George," by Stewardson (1781-1859). This was engraved in mezzotint by Ward. It shows the Earl seated, in the Windsor Uniform, and one need not doubt that the extremely unpleasant face which is here portrayed closely resembles its original. Many important people sat to Stewardson, who was himself painted by Opie and Romney.

The house also contains much excellent furniture, some good china, a flock wall-paper of exquisite design, and two sets of tapestry—one ("The Seaons") of seventeenth-century date, and the other (hunting scenes) of middle eighteenth-century style.

APPENDIX C

Additional Note on Clandon Park

THE origin of Clandon Park as an enclosed estate is to be found in a Charter of Henry VIII, dated 25th of May 1531, whereby Sir Richard Weston of Sutton Place was given licence to empark 600 acres of land and pasture, 50 acres of woodland and 400 acres of furze and heath in the parishes of Merrow and Clandon. The so-called "hunting lodge," which presumably stood on or near the site of the

much larger houses which were built afterwards, appears to have been built by Weston. Much of the land was disparked at a later date.

Brayley and Britton (1850) described the present house as having "all the architectural ornaments applicable to a brick edifice," and asserted that "the centre compartment of the principal front . . . is cased in white marble." The basement was "hidden by a projecting balustrade which, with a handsome double flight of steps that leads to the grand entrance, forms the boundary of a continued terrace in front of the building."

The most accurate pictorial records of the original west front are photographs, taken prior to 1876, which are now, unfortunately, too faded for reproduction. They show (far better than the early painting, made about 1733) the graceful austerity of Leoni's design.

In both of the so-called World Wars the house was shaken by enemy bombs, though not seriously. A Zeppelin flew over Clandon in October 1915, dropping its bombs near the Portsmouth road and rattling the doors and windows of the house—which was then being used as a military hospital. There were many troubles in connexion with the hospital work, and it did not become "a going concern" (I quote the fifth Earl of Onslow) until January 1916, under the management of the then Countess of Onslow. The small room in the north-east angle of the house on the ground floor, originally Lady Onslow's boudoir, was converted into the operating theatre, and there no fewer than 747 operations were carried out in the course of the war. In the Second World War, as I have stated in Appendix A, the house was used as a repository by the Public Record Office. No damage was caused to the building by enemy action, though many bombs, including "flying bombs," fell in the neighbourhood.

APPENDIX D

George Wither and Sir Richard Onslow

THE following relevant extracts from Wither's pamphlet, *Justitiarius Justificatus* (1646), are of the greatest value in showing the case against the Red Fox, Colonel Sir Richard Onslow, a case which un-

doubtedly represented the opinion, whether reasonable or otherwise, of those who opposed the Onslow interest in Surrey. In my transcription I retain the original spelling, but omit the italics.

"Sir Richard Onslow, and some other of his Friends in the Countie of Surrey, have as it seems found it pertinent to the establishing of their Designs or Government there, that I should be thrust out of the Commission of the Peace, as I have been, out of some Committees, and out of my habitation, for no other causes, but such as are concealed in the breast of the said Sir Richard; who, having got (as it were) the Supremacie over all Causes, and all Persons Ecclesiasticall and Civill, within his Dominions, disposeth of Elections, prefereth Deputie-Lieutenants, maketh and unmaketh Justices of the Peace, Committee-men, Colonells, and all other inferiour Militarie Officers, Marshalls, Treasurers, and Collectors, as hee pleaseth; yea, favours and disfavours, imposeth and taketh off, imprisons and sets at libertie, builds up and pulls downe, armeth and dis-armeth, ordreth and dis-ordreth, according to his discretion, with little or no contradiction. . . .

"I was (without my seeking or knowledge thereof, until it was determined) freely and unanimously nominated for Colonell, by the Committee of the Militia for Surrey (being a very full Committee sitting at Kingston) and was (by the same Committee) August 7, 1644, ordered to take charge of all Forces, then raised, and to be raised, in the East, and middle Divisions of Surrey; and . . . I presumed to accept thereof, without Sir Richard Onslowes consent; who, indeed, was much out of patience therewith, and could never after be at quiet, untill he had contrived the new modelling of the Militia, there, according to his own fancie. . . .

"I seldome concurred with him, in his designes; especially in his opposition to the Association; in his arming Malignants, and others promiscuously; and, in his putting the County into those postures, and to those excessive-impertinent charges, and troubles, which, in my judgment, were more likelie (by weakening, and discontenting the people) to indanger, then to secure, those parts. . . .

"For, when I consider the series, and concatenation of his proceedings in Surrey, and his continuing-endeavours from time to time, in prosecutions, with reference to that Castle [Farnham], (with the manifold charges, disturbances and divisions, which have been occasioned, by his restlesse seeking to accomplish some secret designe of his own, which, I conceive he hath, or hath had, upon that Place) I am still so perswaded, my thoughts have therein done him no wrong; that, I professe againe, I do verily believe, he hath aimed at some establishment there, for his own advantage, ever since the warre

began; and, that he hath thereby occasioned most of the miseries which have wasted Hampshire, and Surrey. . . .

"If the said Sir Richard conceive, that such thoughts, and such a beleefe of him, as is afore expressed, are a wrong unto him; or, if it be injurious unto him, for me to think (as, I confesse, I do, upon verie good grounds, in my opinion) that he is the greatest Favourer of Delinquents, and the most bitter and implacable Enemy to them, who are eminently Well-affected to the Parliament, of any man in Surrey, so much pretending the contrarie, as he hath done; Verily, he himselfe, and not I, is cause of the injurie (if any be) by giving many occasions of such thoughts. . . .

"These particulars considered, Sir Richard Onslow might have manifested more prudence, by forbearing, to provoke mee beyond all moderation; for, the patient creature, who can passe by scornes, and injuries, or let a Foole ride him, three or foure years together, without kicking, or hurling his Rider into the dirt, may be pinched in such a place, or Wither-gall'd in such a hot season, that his wronged patience may, perchance, turne into madnesse, and so, both the Foole, and the Asse, mischiefe each other. . . .

"But, *Fiat voluntas Dei*, I have discharged my conscience, and, am assured, that God, who hath manie times heretofore delivered me from powerfull, and malicious Enemies, to my reputation, and their shame, will be as mercifull unto mee, now, and hereafter."

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